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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

Nature and Property

OF

Languages in General,

And on the

ADVANTAGES, DEFECTS,

AND

MANNER of Improving

THE

ENGLISH TONGUE

In Particular.

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THE

PREFACE.

THE *following* Treatiſe, *is, in a great Meaſure, form'd upon the Plan of Mr.* Du Tremblay, *once Profeſſor of Languages, in the Royal Academy of* Angiers: *And that the Reader may not be at a Loſs for the Knowledge of ſeveral Things, which, in the Courſe of the Work, are either mention'd, or alluded to; I thought it not improper to premiſe the beſt Account, that I could learn, of the* Controverſy, *which, for ſome Years, continued in* France, *and occaſion'd our Author, among other* Wits *of the firſt Rank, to employ his Pen as an Arbitrator in it.*

In the Reign of Lewis XIII. *about the Year* 1629, *there was a famous*

Club *at* Paris, *made up of Men of uncommon Merit and Learning; who met every Week in a familiar Converſation, talk'd about News, about Books, about other indifferent Matters; and, when any among them was upon publiſhing a Work, had it read in Common, and gave their Thoughts and Obſervations upon it, before it appear'd in Print.*

This Club *continu'd for upwards of three or four Years, in the greateſt Amity and Innocence imaginable, and with incredible Profit and Pleaſure to themſelves; till at length Cardinal* Richelieu *got Intelligence of them, and, as he had a Mind naturally turn'd to great Undertakings, was a paſſionate Lover of the* French *Tongue, and himſelf no mean Compoſer in it; he thought, that ſo learned and ingenious a Set of Men might be apply'd to the Glory and Ornament of their Country, if they were once brought into a regular Society, and eſtabliſh'd by proper Authority.*

He offer'd them therefore, not only his own Favour and Protection, but the King's Letters Patent, *to legitimize their Meetings; and preſſed the Thing with ſo much Importunity, that they could not well refuſe accepting it: ſo that, on the* 10th *of* July, *in the Year* 1637, *they held their firſt Aſſembly, under the Name of the* French Academy, *in the Houſe of their illuſtrious Protector.*

The Deſign of this Academy, and its firſt Inſtitution (as their * *excellent Hiſtorian tells us) was to* refine *the* French *Tongue to ſuch a Degree, as to make it capable of the moſt exalted Eloquence. And, to this purpoſe, they propos'd to draw up two large Treatiſes of* Rhetorick *and* Poetry, *in order to reform the then-current manner of Writing, both in Verſe and Proſe. But before they came to that, they found a* Grammar *would be needful to explain the ſeveral Parts of Speech, and both*

* Mr. *Pelliſon*, pag. 77.

their regular and irregular Conſtructions; and above all a Dictionary, *to be, as it were, a Treaſure and Magazine both of their ſimple Words, and receiv'd Phraſes. But of all this Project nothing has yet appear'd, but their Dictionary, which was begun upon the Plan, which Mr.* Chapelin *preſented in* 1639, *continued by the Joint-Labour of the whole Fraternity, and coſt them indeed ſo much time, (for it was not finiſh'd till* 1694,) *that it is an hard matter to gueſs, when their other three Works, (no leſs neceſſary, and perhaps not much leſs difficult) are to ſee the Light.*

The Fame of this Academy, *at its firſt Inſtitution, rais'd a Spirit of Emulation throughout the whole Kingdom: The Court came readily into a Project of the Prime Miniſter's abetting; Perſons of the greateſt Quality gave in their Names; and Men of all Sciences and Profeſſions were encourag'd to ſend in their Doubts and Obſervations, to facilitate the great Undertaking.*

Nay,

Nay, the Spirit of Emulation ſpread itſelf ſo far, that in ſeveral other Cities of the Kingdom, ſuch as Soiſſons, Niſmes, Caën, Arles, Angiers, &c. *Societies of the ſame Nature were ſet up; ſome of which, by the Letters of their Inſtitution, were oblig'd to ſend, every Year,* * *a Piece of Eloquence to the Academy of* Paris, *which us'd to be read in Publick. So that the Improvement of their Language, at this time, ſeems to have been the univerſal Study and Inclination of the Kingdom; but this Zeal abated upon the Death of the Cardinal, and under the Adminiſtration of his Succeſſor, who was not ſuch a Lover of the* French, *and their Language, was quite extinct.*

Theſe ſeveral Societies however, had not long proceeded in their Undertaking, before they met with great Oppoſition from ſuch as admir'd the Ancients, *and would allow nothing to be Praiſeworthy, but what came from them.*

* Mr. *Pelliſon*, pag. 76.

" *The* French, they ſaid, *was a weak*
" *and ſimple Language, of an uncer-*
" *tain Signification, of a ſmall Compaſs*
" *and Extent, that had no Strength,*
" *no Beauty, no Elegance of its own;*
" *was, in ſhort, but a* derivative
" Medley, *and incapable to be faſhion'd*
" *into any Form or Figure of Eloquence,*
" *and ſo they decry'd the whole Deſign*
" *as a mere* Chimera.

What contributed to haſten the Diſpute, was ſome conſiderable Succeſſes the King had obtain'd againſt his Enemies, and the great deſire Cardinal Richelieu *had to perpetuate the Memory of them, and of the* Rank, *which he held in the Adminiſtration, when the Kingdom was bleſſed with ſuch Proſperity.*

The Square in Paris, *that is called* la Place Royal, *every one knows, what has been there. It is ſhewn to all Strangers, as one of the moſt beautiful Parts of the Town, and, what is its great Ornament, is the Effigies of* Lewis XIII. *on Horſeback, which the* Cardinal

Cardinal *cauſed to be erected in* 1639, *upon a large Pedeſtal of white Marble; but in what Language the Inſcriptions were to be written, occaſion'd the Diſpute.*

The Latin *Tongue had been a long while in Poſſeſſion of theſe Matters, and, for its Brevity and Expreſſiveneſs, was thought the only one proper for the* Lapidary-Stile: *But the* Cardinal, *who (as I ſaid before) was a great Lover of the* French, *was willing to try the Strength of his new-appointed Academy, and what the Power of that Language could produce. Accordingly he gave large Encouragement and Rewards to ſuch, as ſhould excel in any kind of* French *Compoſition, whether it was* Verſe *or* Proſe. *However, to ſatisfy both Parties, he order'd the Inſcriptions to be in both Languages; and ſo I have ſet them down, in the manner they are engraven on the Pedeſtal, that the Reader may compare them together and judge.*

On the Face of the Pedeſtal *towards St.* Antony's-Street.

POUR LA GLORIEUSE ET IM-
-MORTELLE MEMOIRE
du
tres-grand, et tres-invincible
LOUIS LE JUSTE,
XIII du nom. Roy de *France*
et de *Navarre*
ARMAND Cardinal, Duc de *Riche-*
-lieu, ſon principal Miniſtre dans
tous ſes illuſtres et genereaux Deſſeins,
Comblé d'Honneurs, et de Bien-
-faits par un ſi bon Maitre, et
un ſi genereux Monarque, lui
a fait elever cette Statue:
Pour une Marque eternelle de ſon Zele,
de ſa Fidelitie, et de ſa
Reconnoiſſance. 1639.

On that towards the Menimes.

LUDOVICO XIII. CHRISTIANISSIMO,
Galliæ et *Navarræ* Regi,
Juſto, pio, fælici, victori,
Triumphatori,
Semper auguſto,
ARMANDUS Cardinalis,
Dux Richelius,
Præcipuorum Regni Onerum
adjutor
et adminiſter,
Domino optimè merito, principique
Munificentiſſimo,
Fidei ſuæ, Devotionis,
Et ob innumera Beneficia, im-
menſoſque Honores
Sibi Collatos,
Perenne grati Animi monumentum
hanc Statuam Equeſtrem
ponendam Curavit
Anno Dom. 1639.

There

There are, beſides theſe, two other Inſcriptions, one in French *and the other in* Latin *Verſe, but they are of later Compoſition, and were Engraven upon the* Pedeſtal, *long after the* Cardinal's *Death; the Reader however may have ſome deſire to know them.*

On the Right-Hand.

POUR LOUIS LE JUST
SONNET.

Que ne peut la virtu, que ne peut le Courage?
J'ay dompté pour jamais l'Hereſie en ſon fort,
Du Tage imperieux j'ay fait trembler le Bord
Et du Rhin juſqu' a l'Ebre accrû mon Heritage.
J'ay ſauvé par mon Bras l'Europe d'Eſclavage:
Et ſi tant de travaux n'euſſent haſté mon ſort,
J'euſſe attaqué l'Aſie, et d'un pieux effort
J'euſſe du Saint Tombeau vangé le long Servage.
ARMAND le grand Armand, d'ame de mes exploits,
Porta de toutes parts mes Armes & mes Loix,
Et donna tout l'eclat aux Rayons de ma Gloire.
Enfin il m' eleva ce pompeux Monument,
Ou pour rendre à ſon Nom. Memoire pour Memoire,
Je veux qu' avec le mien, il vive inceſſamment.

On the Left-Hand.

Quod Bellator *Hydros* pacem ſpirare Rebelles,
Deplumes trepidare *Aquilas*, miteſcere *Pardos*,
Et depreſſa jugo ſubmittere Colla *Leones*,
Deſpectat LUDOICUS equo ſublimis aheno,
Non Digiti, non Artifices fecere Camini,
Sed virtus et plena Deo Fortuna peregit.
ARMANDUS vindex Fidei paciſque ſequeſter
Auguſtum curavit opus; populiſque verendam
Regali voluit Statuam conſurgere Circo.
Ut poſt Civilis depulſa pericula Belli
Et circum-domitos armis felicibus Hoſtes
Eternum Dominâ LUDOICUS in urbe triumphet.

As ſoon as the French *Tongue had made this ſtand, and ſhewn its Capacity for greater Compoſitions, it was not long before it had its Advocates.* Mr. Charpentier, *in his Treatiſe of* its Excellency, *has ſaid a great deal in its Commendation, and ſhewn that it is as full, and ſignificant, and every way as well fitted for* Deviſes, *and publick Inſcriptions, to explain our Thoughts, and record the Memory of Facts, as any of the Ancients ever were.* Mr. Laboureur *has gone farther; for he pleads not only for an Equality, but a Superiority over the* Latin *Tongue, eſpecially in the plain and* natural Order *of its Conſtruction, which he makes the chief Requiſite of any Speech.* Sluſius *indeed anſwers him with a great deal of Vivacity, and good Senſe; but, what is his Adverſary's main Argument, viz.* the Simplicity of Conſtruction, *he ſeems to give up, and has made his Anſwers ſo very ſhort, that he rather plays upon the*

the Surface *of the Queſtion, than makes it a Matter of ſolemn Debate.*

The Controverſy about Words drew on a Diſpute about Things; and Mr. Perrault, *in his* Parallels, *has, by an Induction of ſeveral Inſtances, ſhewn the Sufficiency of the* French *Tongue for all kinds of Compoſition, both in Verſe and Proſe, and that their Orators and Hiſtorians, their Poets and Philoſophers, have, in their ſeveral kinds of Writing, equall'd, if not out-done the* Greeks *and* Latins.

He had a powerful Adverſary; for Boileau, *in his Reflections on* Longinus, *undertakes to anſwer him; but does it, I think, with ſo much Heat and Paſſion, as ſadly impairs the Weight of what he ſays. Some Pains he takes indeed to vindicate the Reputation of* Homer *and* Virgil, *but he goes no farther into Queſtion, then the Hint, which the Author, he comments on, gives him, and, (notwithſtanding all the hard Names, wherewith he loads his Adverſary) has left the reſt of the* Ancients *almoſt all unde-*

undefended, and the whole Body of the Moderns *in the full Poſſeſſion of the Praiſes, that* Perrault *gives them.*

This Strife and Contention among learned Men rais'd the Wits *of the Age, and occaſion'd the Publication of ſeveral Things, that were wrote with great Vivacity of Imagination. The* War of the Authors, Parnaſſus refom'd, *and* the Account of the late Troubles, that happened in the Kingdom of Eloquence, *are all entertaining Pieces; but what ſhews the Strength of Fancy, and Neatneſs of Raillery moſt, is* the Poetick Hiſtory of the War lately Proclaim'd between the Ancients and Moderns. *The whole indeed is a fine Allegory, boldly carried on, and wrote in the Epick Manner. The Choice of their Generals, the Compoſition of their Armies, the Order of their March, and the Manner of their Battle, their Councils and Embaſſies, their Speeches, and other important Actions, are all related on with ſuch Strength of Wit, and*

Solidity

Solidity of Judgment, that, beſides the Beauty of the Allegory, *they form a very curious Piece of* Criticiſm, *to ſuch, as are converſant in the Art, and acquainted with the Authors.*

The Author, who is here offer'd to the Engliſh *Reader, in all Probability was one of the lateſt, that came into the Diſpute. He ſets himſelf up for a Judge and Arbitrator between the contending Parties, and (what was wanting before) eſtabliſhes* Rules, *whereby to direct himſelf and others in the Diſquiſition of ſo nice a Controverſy. His Rules are good, his Deciſion juſt, and the Reaſons he gives for publiſhing his Sentiments with ſo much Freedom, are compriz'd in the ſhort Advertiſement preceding his Book.*

" *At one time or other,* ſays he, *a* " *more ſufficient Pen perhaps may un-* " *dertake this Argument; but, till that* " *comes to paſs, this little Treatiſe* " *may be of ſome uſe, to diſabuſe* " *the World; to put a ſtop to thoſe*

" *immo-*

" *immoderate Praiſes, which are heap'd*
" *upon the* Ancients, *to the Prejudice*
" *of the* Moderns; *and to let us ſee,*
" *that the Contempt and Diſparage-*
" *ment, which the Admirers of Anti-*
" *quity throw upon the* latter, *has not*
" *all the Foundation in Reaſon, that*
" *they imagine. It will be of uſe, at*
" *leaſt, to convince us, that no one*
" *Diſpute can leſs deſerve the Study*
" *and Application of the* Learned;
" *ſince, tho' we were agreed about*
" *Rules, whereby to determine the*
" *Queſtion, we ſhall ſtill want a diſ-*
" *intereſted Judge to apply them, as*
" *long as Prejudice prevails, and Men*
" *are wedded to a Party.*

RE-

REFLECTIONS

ON

Languages in General,

AND THE

ENGLISH TONGUE

In Particular.

CHAP. I.

The INTRODUCTION.

IT is ſcarce to be imagin'd, but that thoſe, who apply themſelves to the Improvement of their own Tongues, ſhould conceive ſo good an Opinion of them, as to think they might be brought, at leaſt to *equal*, if not to *excel*, ſuch as are in moſt eſteem, *viz.* the *Latin*, and the *Greek*. But ſince Lan-

Languages cannot be improv'd without the Aſſiſtance of Sciences, and theſe Sciences are uſually learnt from *Latin* and *Greek* Authors; it hence comes to paſs, that others are naturally carried into a fond Admiration of theſe two Tongues, in preference to all the reſt.

This different way of thinking has ſo divided the Opinions of a great part of the learned World about the Merit of *Modern* Languages, that ſome have extoll'd them above the *Ancients*, while others have debas'd and undervalu'd them ſo, as to think there is no room for the leaſt Compariſon.

'Tis not long ago ſince a Controverſy of this Nature became very famous in *France*, upon the Subject of *Inſcriptions* on publick Monuments. Thoſe that were Advocates for the *Latin* Tongue, were of Opinion, that no *other* was proper to preſerve the Memory of ſuch great Actions, as were done about that time: but their Adverſaries contended that the *French* was equally capable to all kinds of Compoſition with all imaginable Succeſs, and that it ſhould the rather be employ'd than any other, both in point of eſteem for *ones Native Language*, and in hopes of advancing it to the ſame Beauties and Perfections, that the *Greeks* and *Latins* procured to theirs.

On this Occaſion I took upon me to examine the Reaſons of thoſe, who ſo much depretiate our *Tongue*; and I find that they are no otherwiſe grounded, than upon a mere Prepoſſeſſion, which adheres to almoſt all ſuch as have been Educated in Schools, occaſion'd by the high Sentiments of Eſteem and Reſpect for *Greek* and *Latin*, which Maſters take care to infuſe into

into their Pupils, in prejudice to their Mother *Tongues*.

Nature however and Reaſon have no hand in producing ſuch Sentiments, as may juſtly be call'd Unnatural; ſince 'tis no leſs criminal, and againſt the Laws of Nature, to Rebel againſt one's Native *Tongue*, than againſt one's Native Country.

Upon enquiry into this matter, I find that Men undertake to make Parallels in *Tongues* on pure Prepoſſeſſion; that conſulting Reaſon and Nature we muſt be perſuaded of the great Impoſſibillity of making ſuch Parallels, with a ſufficient exactneſs, to form any certain Judgment of the Merit of each in particular, and of the Advantages which ſome have over others; ſince to effect this, we muſt not only have an equal knowledge of them all, but alſo a *Model* of Perfection, wherein the whole World is agreed, to compare them by, and eſpecially, an unbyaſs'd Opinion, and Impartiality, with regard to them all.

'Tis certain that no Man can keep his Mind long in ſuch a diſpoſition; for however Impartial we may be in other reſpects, we all of us have a greater affection for one *Tongue* than another; and what we beſt love, will always appear moſt beautiful to us: Nor do we underſtand them all alike, and conſequently muſt be induc'd to prefer that which we underſtand beſt. But, in fine, if we were void of Prepoſſeſſion, and had an equal knowledge of them all, yet by what Rule can we Meaſure them, ſo as to make a certain Judgment, and thereby give any of them a juſt Preference?

If Angels indeed ſpoke ſuch a *Language* as Men could underſtand (as St. *Paul* ſeems to intimate they do) that *Language* might well be a Model of Perfection to us: And ſuch Tongues as came neareſt to it, would undoubtedly merit the firſt Rank and Eſteem. But we want this Model, and if, in defect thereof, we ſuppoſe, that a *Language* is arriv'd to the utmoſt Perfection it is capable of; when, for inſtance, it is become proper to treat of all ſorts of Subjects, in all kind of Stiles, with all the moſt Exquiſite Beauties and Richneſs of Eloquence; we may ſtill ſay that every other *Tongue*, is ſuſceptible of the ſame Perfection, as much as the *Greek* and *Latin*; Provided it be as well Cultivated by Men as Learned and Judicious as were the *Greeks* and *Romans:* And conſequently, *Tongues*, conſider'd in themſelves, and according to their Nature, are all perfectly equal.

The Deſign which I propoſe is to prove this Equality; and in Order to Execute it with ſome Method, I ſhall firſt examin what *Tongues* are in themſelves, according to their *Origin*, their *Progreſs*, their *Declenſion*, and their entire *Extinction*. I ſhall then trace all the Qualities which make them eſtimable, ſuch as *Purity* and *Elegance* of Terms, *Nobleneſs* of Expreſſion, and the *Number* and *Cadence* of their Periods. By this diſcuſſion, I hope to convince all reaſonable Men, that there is no ſolid Grounds for applauding ſome *Tongues* ſo much above all others; and to ſhew them withal what Degrees of Improvement any *Tongue* has hitherto attain'd, or is farther capable of.

But

But before I enter upon my Subject, it will be neceſſary to advertiſe my Reader, that I only conſult Nature and Reaſon, and that the Ear and Imagination ought to have no ſhare in this Deciſion, becauſe they are both naturally prepoſſeſs'd in favour of ſome particular *Tongue*; for 'tis certain that neither the Ear nor Imagination can be perfectly inform'd only of the Pronunciation, and Cadence of one *Tongue*, and therefore cannot have a true Reliſh of the Number and Harmony of others, and conſequently cannot form any certain Judgment about them.

I doubt not but at firſt ſight of what I have now advanc'd, great Numbers will object, and ſay, " What, Exclude the Ear and Imagi- " nation from a Right of Judging *Tongues?* " What is there, wherein they are better quali- " fy'd, than in this? But their Juriſdiction has its bounds; It extends only to the Terms and Expreſſions of ſuch *Tongues*, as they have a true Taſte of, and to the Stiles of the different Authors who wrote in ſuch *Tongues*; that is properly ſpeaking, to their Native *Tongues:* For in thoſe only can they be truly inform'd. But when we come to talk of *Tongues* in General, 'tis Reaſon only that ought to pronounce Judgment, becauſe that alone is void of Intereſt and Prepoſſeſſion, at leaſt, that alone has the moſt ſufficient Lights to make an Impartial Deciſion, and that I conceive will be to reduce them all to an Equality.

It may be thought ſtrange perhaps that I ſhould maintain an Equality of *Languages*, without comparing them altogether; or that I ſhould compare them, without underſtanding them:

But to this I anſwer, that I do not compare *Tongues* one with another. For I have already ſaid, that this Matter appear'd to me impoſſible; yet I believe I can, nevertheleſs, conclude upon this Equality, from ſome general Notions of what Conſtitutes a *Tongue*, and makes its Merit and Excellence. I do not know other Men in particular, I hardly know my ſelf; and yet, from the General Idea which I have of human Nature, I may conclude all Nations to be alike in what appertains to that Nature; and that they are equally capable of Arts and Sciences, of Virtues and of Vices.

But as there are particular Men more learned, and more capable of Maxims of Virtue than others; ſo it may be ſaid that there are *Tongues* more ſuſceptible of the beauties of *Language* than others: And to this I anſwer, that tho' one Man cannot poſſibly become ſo Eloquent, nor ſo Wiſe and Virtuous as another may be, (becauſe the *Almighty*, who form'd Mankind, has diſtributed Natural Talents to each, as it ſeemeth good to him) yet the *Tongue* of any one Nation, may receive all the Beauties and Politeneſs, that any other can boaſt of.

But the real and actual (it may be reply'd) and not the poſſible and imaginary perfection of *Tongues* is here the Queſtion; on the contrary, I ſay, that the poſſible perfection is the point in queſtion; ſince in ſome certain Compoſitions, we cannot prefer one *Tongue* to another, but upon a ſuppoſition, that the other can never be carry'd to a State of Perfection capable of ſucceeding in ſuch Compoſitions. For if we are ſatisfy'd that it might, we ought to make no Difficulty of employing it, eſpecially if it is our

Native

Native *Tongue*; to the end, that by frequent uſe it may acquire an Aptitude, which as yet it may poſſibly want; and 'tis to diſcountenance the diſadvantageous Opinion which we may poſſibly entertain of the Capacities of our own *Tongue*, that I write this litttle Treatiſe.

We ſhould indeed be prepoſſeſs'd in Favour of our own *Tongue*, if we are ever minded to Cultivate it in earneſt; for if the *Greeks* and *Romans* had eſteem'd their ſeveral *Tongues*, no more than ſome of our Learned Men do ours; they never cou'd have rais'd them, to that high degree of perfection, which ſo deſervedly makes them the admiration of all Learned and Judicious Men. And their Succeſs in that Attempt, is enough to Animate our Zeal and Emulation, to carry our *Tongue*, (which is capable of as great a Perfection as any) to as high a Degree of Beauty and Politeneſs, as the joint Endeavours of every Learned Man can raiſe it. And let but every Nation be perſuaded that they can make as much of their *Language*, and bring it to the ſame Height, that other Nations have done before them, and it will not be long before they will ſet about the Improvement and Perfection of it.

CHAP. II.

What a Tongue is.

THO' no Subject has had more Pens emp'oy'd about it, than that of Languages; yet I have not ſeen any Author, who has given us a preciſe Idea; that is to ſay, who has Clearly Defin'd to us, the True Nature of a *Tongue*, and what it is in General.

That which Monſieur *Furetiere* tells us, *viz. That a Tongue ſignifies a Train of Words, wherein a People are agreed to make themſelves underſtood to each other*; is not at all a perfect definition. I ſhall therefore take the freedom to add ſomething to it, which may make it more full, clear and intelligible, where it is Defective.

What we call a *Tongue* then, is, *A Train, or Collection of Certain Articulate Sounds, proper to be united, whereof a People makes uſe to ſignify Things, and Communicate their Thoughts; and which, in themſelves, are Indifferent to ſignify one Thought, or one Thing, no more than another.*

To explain this Definition farther: I ſay, *A Tongue is a Train or Collection of Articulate Sounds*, becauſe thoſe Sounds, which are contain'd in Dictionaries, have naturally no more Connexion between them, than the Stones which form an Heap; nor can they acquire it but by Compoſition, any more than thoſe Stones can form a Regular Building without the Artful Diſpoſition of a Maſon.

I call them *Articulate Sounds*, to diſtinguiſh between them and the Cry of Beaſts, and even of Men themſelves, when agitated by Paſſion, which have no Articulations, becauſe they are made with one and the ſame opening of the Mouth, one and the ſame Motion of the Organ, and one and the ſame Impulſe of the Air; and conſequently cannot ſignify any thing, but certain Natural Emotions or Paſſions: Whereas *Articulate Sounds* are form'd by different Movements of the Organ, which breaking the Air, differently do produce either different Syllables, which are as it were Members whereof thoſe Sounds are compos'd, or different Letters neceſſary to compoſe Syllables; for Letters are but parts of Syllables: Excepting Vowels, which are Sounds of themſelves, and intirely united.

It is farther neceſſary, *that theſe Sounds ſhould be proper to be united*, becauſe otherwiſe they could never make ſuch a Compoſition as is neceſſary to form a Diſcourſe. And this properly conſiſts in the Conformity of the Pronunciation of Words and their Terminations; and in the Inflexion of *Nouns* and *Verbs*, which makes, what we ordinarily call, the Analogy of a *Tongue*. Without theſe Conformities, Words cou'd not unite themſelves in an eaſy and agreeable manner, *viz.* eaſy to be pronounc'd, and agreeable to be heard.

The proof of what I ſay, may appear, by mixing together, Words of divers *Tongues*, where the one may require a Stronger, the other an Eaſier pronunciation: All *Tongues* are in themſelves thus oppoſite, for there are none, but what have different and contrary Pronunciations. We ſhou'd find then, that ſuch a Mixture

Mixture or Conjunction of Words would be of a harſh pronunciation, and conſequently diſagreeable to the Ear; And ſhould feel the ſame pain and difficulty to pronounce them, as we ſhould to aſcend or deſcend a Ladder, whoſe Rounds are of an unequal diſtance, ſo that we muſt either ſhorten or widen each ſtep we take, which cannot be done without much fatigue and great caution. And in like manner, in a Diſcourſe, compos'd as before mention'd, it wou'd be neceſſary, that, at every Word, the Organs of the Voice ſhou'd change their Tenſion, that they ſhou'd make great Efforts to pronounce a Word that is harſh and ſtrong, and immediately relax themſelves again to pronounce another Word that is more ſmooth and eaſy; which cou'd not fail of equally fatigueing both the Speaker and the Hearer, for the Hearer always feels the Pain of the Speaker.

Theſe Words wou'd ſtill have ſomething more diſagreeable, by reaſon of their Diſſonance, and could not form that Cadence and Harmony, which is neceſſary to pleaſe the Ear. They would be like a Building, compos'd of pieces of different Orders, which could not be agreeable to the Sight, becauſe the Parts cou'd have no juſt proportion.

Theſe are ſome of the Reaſons, why the Sounds, which Compoſe the ſame *Tongue*, ought to have an Analogy, by a Conformity of their Articulation and Termination; they ought to have the ſame *in the Inflexion of* Nouns *and* Verbs, ſince if every one, in expreſſing their Thoughts, changed *Nouns* and *Verbs* according to their fancy, Men could not underſtand one another; and there would properly be no ſuch thing

thing as a *Tongue* at all, becauſe no one People or Nation wou'd uſe the ſame.

I have added, that *theſe Sounds were in themſelves indifferent to ſignify all ſorts of Thoughts, and Things*; ſince a reaſon cannot be given, why one Term, ſhou'd ſignify rather one Thought or one Thing, than another: We muſt in this caſe have recourſe to common Practice and Cuſtom, which has thus eſtabliſh'd it, by a certain Train or Connexion of Cauſes, wherein Human Prudence has hardly had any ſhare.

The ſame may be ſaid of Articulate Sounds or Words, in regard to the Thoughts and Things they ſignify, as may be ſaid of the Figures, which are call'd Letters, in regard to Words or Sounds. It is only by Cuſtom and Uſe that ſuch a Figure ſignifies ſuch a Sound, and if Cuſtom and Uſe had thought fit, that ſame Figure, might ſignify a quite different Sound. For inſtance, the Letter *A.* might ſignify, that which is intended by the Letter *B:* And in like manner the Word *Hatred*, might ſignify that which is meant by the Word *Love*, and ſo on the contrary. Excepting only ſome particular Sounds, which have been form'd, upon certain Cries, and certain Natural Movements, in order to expreſs ſome certain Paſſions and Affections of Men's Minds.

The reaſon whereof is this, that the Articulate Sounds, of which *Tongues* are compos'd, are not properly Words: They are only the Voice of a Word, as St. *Auguſtin* has it, *vox verbi.* The true Word is all Spiritual, becauſe it is nothing elſe but the Thought, which becomes

Senſible

Senſible, and Incarnates it ſelf, as it were, with the Articulate Sounds to which it is joined, in order to make it paſs into the Intellects of thoſe, whoſe Ears are ſtruck by the Sounds; or rather to give birth to, and render the ſame Ideas preſent to the Underſtanding of the Hearer. And to theſe Articulate Sounds are given the Name of Words, becauſe they are the Sign, or the voice of Words, even as we give the Name of the King, to the King's Picture.

'Tis for this reaſon, that we ordinarily place theſe Signs among what we call Signs of inſtitution, which are oppos'd to Natural Signs. But I am of Opinion, that if there are no Signs truly Natural, there alſo no Signs of pure Inſtitution; and it may be ſaid that in reality they partake both of Inſtitution and Nature. *Aulus Gellius* ſpeaks of a Grammarian who would have it, that they were Natural, and not poſitive Signs, *Non Poſitiva ſed Naturalia*, but the Reaſons which he alledges do no way prove it. *Arnobius* * on the contrary was of Opinion, that *they* were the Works of Reaſon, *Humana iſta ſunt placita*. *Scalliger* choſe a Medium, and wou'd have it, that the *firſt words* were made by chance, *Temere orta*, but that *others* were the work of Reflection; yet there is in theſe Opinions, ſomething which is not altogether true.

I ſhould then believe, that there is more reaſon to ſay, that theſe Signs are poſitive, in as much as they have no Analogy with the things they denote; and that they are Natural, in

* *Lib. 3. de cauſ. Ling. lat. cap. 68.*

in that they have eſtabliſh'd themſelves wihout the deſign or Conſultation of Men. For which reaſon, ſuch as treat of *Tongues* do not appear to me to be exact enough, when they ſuppoſe an Agreement between Men, to eſtabliſh the uſe of certain Terms, in order to ſignify certain Things; as I hope to make appear in the following Chapter.

At preſent this is what appears to me to be the moſt exact Notion of what we call a *Tongue*: but I am ready to retract my own Opinion, when any perſon ſhall ſhew me another, that is juſter.

CHAP. III.

The trifling Notions of ſome Philoſophers about the Origin of Tongues.

PHILOSOPHERS have ſought out the Origin of *Tongues*, but the moſt part of them have no better ſucceeded in the ſearch, than, in that which they have made into the Origin of Men. What has been ſaid by *Epicurus*, *Lucretius*, *Diodorus Siculus*, *Vitruvius*, and ſome others, muſt be look'd upon as mere Dreams; and we cannot ſufficiently wonder that there are, at this Day, Men of Wit, who find even the leaſt probability in their Opinions; but it is very common, with ſome to approve of Thoughts, which they never have examined.

What

What theſe Philoſophers have imagin'd is this. They thought that Men (whether the work of Hazard, or of ſome Intelligent Being) did not ſpeak at firſt, but finding in themſelves a neceſſity for a Correſpondence with one another, and being deſirous to Communicate their Thoughts, and Wills, in order to procure the neceſſary Succours of Life, they firſt uſed a Geſture of the Hand, the Head, the Eyes, *&c.* as ſigns to make themſelves underſtood; And that at length, having found the facility of moving the *Tongue* all manner of ways to form all ſorts of Sounds, they judged *that* alone the moſt proper Member to be us'd, in expreſſing thoſe ſort of Sounds; and thus, in proceſs of time, they compos'd themſelves a *Tongue.* Thus far theſe Philoſophers have imagin'd, and would thereby inſinuate, that Men, having try'd ſeveral Methods to make themſelves underſtood, at laſt concluded upon the Signs of the Voice, as the moſt Commodious.

But we need no long Heſitation to perceive that nothing is more trifling than this, and that it was impoſſible for Men to attain to themſelves a *Tongue* this way: For it cannot be explain'd to us, how Men that knew not how to ſpeak as yet, could ever agree upon a ſet form of Words to expreſs their Thoughts in. We indeed may teach Children, who as yet know not how to ſpeak our *Tongue*, becauſe amongſt our ſelves, our *Tongue* is certain and eſtabliſh'd; and when we talk to Children, or in their preſence, we always uſe the ſame Terms, to ſignify the ſame Thoughts and the ſame Things; which at length accuſtoms them alſo,

to

to uſe the ſame Terms, to the ſame Purpoſe.

Ingenious Men, who already are Maſters of one *Tongue*, might even invent another entirely New, by the Model of that, which they already know. But Men who never yet could ſpeak, could in no wiſe determine what Sorts of Sounds to employ or uſe in Speaking. Words are the Means whereby Men agree on all Things; Men could not therefore agree upon Words, without Words themſelves. If Spectacles, which aſſiſt the Eye-Sight, cannot be made without the help of the Eye, ſo we may ſay, that a *Tongue* compos'd of Words, cannot be made without the help of Words.

To give a more perfect Idea of what I ſay, let us repreſent to ourſelves a Multitude of Men, ſprung all of a ſudden, out of the Earth like Muſhrooms, or fallen from the Clouds like Frogs; each of them arrived at a perfect Age (for there is a Neceſſity to ſuppoſe that) and aſſembling themſelves together in Order to Compoſe a Language. Theſe Men, without doubt, would be very much aſtoniſhed at the Sight of one another, and it is a very difficult Matter to conceive what their Thoughts might be upon this Occaſion. But ſince their Compoſing of a *Tongue* is the Queſtion, it muſt be ſuppos'd that they would fain ſpeak; and there is much Reaſon to believe they would if they could, ſuppoſing them to be made with Paſſions like us; ſince the firſt Deſire we have, when we meet a Man whom we never ſaw before, is to ſpeak to him. But of what ſhould this ſuppos'd Multitude ſpeak, ſince as yet they know not how? You'll ſay perhaps they would ſpeak of their Neceſſaries; that is

if

if they could, they would ſpeak, when preſs'd by Thirſt or Hunger, Heat or Cold; or ſome other Inconvenience, whereof they might ſeek to eaſe themſelves by Natural Inſtinct. Suppoſe then they already find, or are ſome way ſenſible of this Inconvenience, What will they do to render themſelves underſtood to each other, and to Ask, or Offer Mutual Succours? They would, no doubt, ſend forth no Articulate Sounds, but Cries like Brute Animals, or dumb Perſons; and each would ſend out his Cry according to his Fancy. This is *Arnobus*'s Opinion, ſomewhere in his Book againſt the Gentiles, where he derides the Thought whereof I am now ſpeaking. "A "Man who never heard Articulate Voices, can "never do any thing but Cry. *lib.* 2. *Nonne Vocem ſi fuerit Neceſſitate Aliquâ coactus emittere, ut Solemne eſt Multis inarticulatum Neſcio quid, ore hiante Clamabit?*

This new made Race of Men then I ſay, would rather ſend forth Crys than Words; becauſe they could have no more aptitude to articulate their Voices than Infants have, ſince our own Experience ſhews us that the facility of Articulation is only contracted by Imitation. Children accuſtom themſelves to articulate their Voices in Imitation of their Nurſes and Parents; but if they never heard other People do it, they themſelves would never articulate their own.

Mutes are a Demonſtrative Proof of this, ſince 'tis certain that their want of Speech is owing to their want of Hearing. This paſſes for ſo conſtant a Truth, that what is ſaid of a certain King, who (to diſcover what Language was Natural to Man) caus'd Infants to be Nouriſh'd and brought up by Dumb Perſons in Deſart Places

who

who first pronounc'd a certain *Articulate Sound*, which in the Phenician *Tongue* signify'd Bread; but this is only look'd upon as a Fable. Infants thus Nourish'd and brought up, would do no more than Cry like such Brutes, as they had heard.

These Men then destitute of Speech, and never hearing any *Articulate Sound* for their Imitation, would do nothing but Cry; and *that* they would always do, but would never attain to the formation of an *Articulate* or Determin'd Word, to express their Thoughts or Desires by. But now, what Cry or Sound is it, that above all others should be made Choice of to signify such or such a thing? and who could perswade, or oblige Others to employ this or that Man's Sound to Signify this or that thing, rather than the Sound of any other Person? We must, before that can be done, suppose an Agreement between these Speechless Men, whereby they all consent to acquiesce in one particular Man's Device in giving Names to all Ideas and Things, and to use all the same Names and Words, which that particular Man had invented. Without such an Agreement, there would be as many *Tongues* as Men: That is to say, there would properly be no *Tongue* at all, since Men, in this State, could have no Common Terms to express their Minds to one another, as I have said in the foregoing Chapter.

All these Reasons may suffice to make us comprehend, how slender an Appearance of Truth there is in the Conjectures of these Philosophers about the Origin of *Tongues*. And so *Lactantius* says, that reasonable Men can never imagine that

there can be found ſuch a thing, as an Aſſembly of Speechleſs Men. * *Nulla igitur in principio facta eſt ejuſmodi Congregatio, nec Nunquam fuiſſe homines in terra, niſi qui propter Infantiam non Loquerentur, intelliget, cui ratio non deeſt.*

Plato † indeed propoſes a Way how Men might be brought to expreſs themſelves, even ſuppoſing them to be born Speechleſs; but at laſt abandons his own Conjectures, becauſe he perceiv'd, that tho' Men might attain to make themſelves underſtood to each other in familiar and ſenſible things, it would nevertheleſs be impoſſible for them to do it, in regard of ſuch Ideas as were purely Spiritual and Intellectual. And in fine (to cut off all Difficulties about the Inſtitution of Languages) he has recourſe to the Divine Power, ſince all other Notions of the Origin of *Tongues*, has neither Reaſon nor Appearance of Truth, any more than thoſe of the Origin of Men.

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* *De vero Cultu. Cap.* 10.
† *In Cratylo.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

That the Origin of Tongues *is owing to God alone.*

WE, who enjoy the Bleſſings of the True Religion, by the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, have no need to make painful and tedious Enquiries to find out the Origin of Languages; being well aſſur'd, that God created Man with all the Perfections which belong to Human Nature; and conſequently that he received from him the Gift of Speech, and even Words themſelves from the very Moment of his Creation. For if we have no Reaſon to doubt but that Man was Created for Society, and at the ſame time know, that Speech is the firſt and moſt neceſſary Band of that Society, we cannot but think that he muſt have had the Faculty of Speaking from the Moment of his Formation.

For if he was endow'd with all the Knowledge which Human Nature is capable of, which Knowledge, according to * St. *Auguſtin*, was ſuch, as ſurpaſs'd that of the moſt refin'd Genius among us, as much as the Tow'ring Flight of the Eagle ſurpaſſes the ſlow Pace of the Tortoiſe; it would have been a great Imperfection in him, if he could not have ſpoke of all that he knew, and if he could not have explain'd himſelf upon all that occurr'd to his Mind, aſſoon as the Hand of God had finiſh'd him. But now if he was not created with ſuch a Faculty, he muſt have employ'd much Time

* *Contra Pelag.*

hard Labour, and great Application to compoſe himſelf a Speech; all which would have been equally unworthy the Wiſdom and Juſtice of his Creator: Unworthy his Wiſdom, in making Man Defective, and unworthy his Juſtice too, in Condemning him to a Puniſhment, which as yet he had not deſerved.

Thoſe who are not of this Opinion (to give it a Ridiculous Turn) pretend, that in this Manner, we only make of God Almighty a School Maſter or Grammarian, that teaches Men Languages: But they, by this Suggeſtion, do only ſhew, that they have very groſs Conceptions of the Wiſdom and Power of God. God has no Need to ſtoop to the Ordinary Ways of Men to teach them whatever he would have them know; he does it by Methods worthy of himſelf; and in this Method it was that he taught the firſt Man the firſt *Language*.

Man did think as ſoon as he was created; for what kind of Man could he be, that did not think? And as ſoon as he thought, he had a deſire to ſpeak; ſince being made for Society, he could have no Thoughts but what he was willing to communicate. For which Reaſon, as ſoon as he thought, his Thoughts were follow'd by certain Strokes of the Imagination proper to give a Body to his Thoughts, and with a certain Diſpoſition in the Organs of the Voice proper to produce ſuch Sounds, as were requiſite to expreſs them in ſuch Manner, that all his Thoughts, through the whole Courſe of his Life, were cloathed with all the Images, and all the Expreſſions neceſſary to make them Conceivable to others, with the ſame clearneſs and lortineſs, as he himſelf conceived them. All

which

which was done by the Direction of God, and by a neceſſary Conſequence of his wiſe Deſign in the Formation of Man.

But becauſe ſpeaking alone is not ſufficient to enable Man to Compoſe a *Tongue* (it being neceſſary likewiſe that Others ſhould underſtand and comprehend what he ſays) God ſo ordain'd it, that at the ſame time, when the firſt Man ſhould ſpeak, deſcribing certain Things, and expreſſing certain Ideas, his Wife and Children (when he ſhould have them) ſhould hear him ſpeak, and at that time have in their Underſtandings the ſame Ideas, in their Brains the ſame Images, and in the Organs of their Voice the ſame Diſpoſitions to pronounce the ſame Sounds; by which Means they ſhou'd come to underſtand his Thoughts, and to ſpeak and anſwer him *A propos.* And all this as I have ſaid, was accompliſhed by the Laws of God's Wiſdom, for the Execution of his Deſigns, in order to adorn Man with all the Perfections due to his Nature.

If any one ſhould Cavil at what I have ſaid, viz. *that Man could have no Thought but what he would be willing to communicate*; I ſhall ſufficiently anſwer him by ſaying, in the firſt Place, that ſuch a Deſire is what we Our ſelves do conſtantly feel within Our ſelves; Secondly, that tho' a ſinful Man ought to conceal many of his Thoughts for his own Honour, and that of other People, yet an Innocent Man could have none, but what deſerv'd to be known; and Thirdly, as Man is a Being, compos'd of Soul and Body, he ought alſo to have a Power to give a Body to all his Thoughts, and to have the faculty of Speaking, the certain Reſult of

his Nature. In ſhort, Man being born for Society, ought always to be in a State of ſupporting it, ſince the ſtrongeſt and moſt laſting Tyes thereof conſiſt in a Communication of our Thoughts.

'Tis this, which makes it ſo difficult for a Man to keep Secrets, or live in Solitude. *Cicero* ſomewhere in his *Offices* ſays, that tho' Man were ever ſo plentifully provided with all the Neceſſaries of Life, yet he would not be contented with Contemplation only, but would ſtrive and endeavour to ſpeak; *Socium ſui Studij quærens, tum docere, tum diſcere vellet; tum audire tum dicere.* So true it is that Nature, without Speech, would be of no uſe to form Society, and that there is nothing which ſeparates Mankind more than the Diverſity of *Tongues*, as, ſays St. *Auguſtine* in his Book, *de civitate Dei.* If Two Men, who could not underſtand each other (ſays the ſame Father) ſhould meet, and be obliged to live together, Two Brutes, even of different Species, would better aſſociate themſelves than thoſe two ſtrange Men, notwithſtanding the Natural reſemblance between them; and a Man would rather chuſe the Company of his Dog, than that of a Man, whoſe *Tongue* he could not underſtand. In a Word, 'tis the Diverſity of *Tongues* that renders Men *Barbarous* to one another, and incapable of giving mutual Aſſiſtance; whereas 'tis Nature, the Love of Society, and the Senſe of our Neceſſities, that produces in Man an Inceſſant Deſire of Speaking.

This then is the manner wherein the firſt *Tongue* was form'd. All the Thoughts of *Adam* were join'd to certain Sounds to ſignify them, and thoſe Sounds repreſented the ſame Thoughts,

Thoughts, which he had, when he form'd them, to the Underſtandings of thoſe, that heard him. He firſt gave Names to all Living Creatures; in the Courſe of his Life, he entertained himſelf with the Converſation of his Wife, his Children, and his Grand-Children; and thus ſpeaking to them of all Things, and of all the Arts and Sciences, whereof he received as full a knowledge from God as Man was capable, the Words which made up their Converſation, compos'd the firſt *Tongue*; for the Ideas of Thoughts and Things were affix'd to Words, and ever afterwards repreſented themſelves along with them to the Underſtanding and Imagination. This, if I miſtake not, was that Mechanick way whereby the *Tongue* of *Adam* was form'd. Nor can I think the Origin of *Tongues*, can any where elſe be found, without giving birth to Chimeras.

It was God then alone who was truly the Author of the firſt *Tongue*, as well as the firſt Man. We obſerv'd that *Plato* perceiv'd the neceſſity of running back to the Principal of all Beings to find out the Principle and Origin of *Tongues*. *Quintillian* perceiv'd the ſame, For, *who doubts*, ſays this great Rhetorician, * *but that Man received Speech from him who gave him Being, and even as ſoon as he received that Being?* Nam cui dubium eſt quin Sermonem ab ipſa rerum Natura geniti protinùs homines acceperint?

The Union of Ideas purely Spiritual and Intellectual with corporal and ſenſible Sounds, is no ſmall Myſtery; or how it comes to paſs, that ſuch a Sound ſhould, at firſt touch, excite in the Soul ſuch or ſuch a Thought. Theſe

* *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 2.

Things aſtoniſh'd *Plato*, * and as great a Philoſopher as he was, he wou'd not undertake to penetrate them; He only ſays that we do not know theſe Ideas by their Sounds, but by themſelves. We are aſſured however of the Truth of this union by continu'd Experience, and we are aſſur'd by Reaſon, that it is God himſelf who made this union, ſince no other Power could do it.

Here then, I think we ought to bound all our Curioſity in Relation to the Origin of *Tongues*. Not only the firſt came immediately from God, but alſo all thoſe, which were form'd at the Tower of *Babel*, as we ſhall ſee in the ſequel.

By this Hiſtory of the Origin of *Tongues*, or (if ſome will deny it that Title) by theſe Conjectures, which I call reaſonable, (ſince they are grounded upon our Idea of the Wiſdom of God, and the order of Things, ſince *Pagans* have had them as well as we, and the moſt knowing Men in theſe matters have had no other.) By this Hiſtory, I ſay, or theſe Conjectures, it may be ſeen what ſmall part Human Prudence could have in the Eſtabliſhent of *Tongues*. For if the firſt *Tongue* was not the Reſult of it, the other and ſubſequent ones were much leſs ſo.

When the firſt Men ſpoke, they expreſs'd their Words without Choice or Deliberation, without premeditating or contriving them; not unlike the Cries, which Pain, or ſome other Paſſion extorts from the Mouth of Animals: And in this reſpect, theſe Words were natural Signs. But beauſe

* *In Cratylo.*

cauſe Words in themſelves are indifferent to what ſignification they are applied, and becauſe God, who fram'd the Organs of theſe Men, might have made them pronounce other Words, to ſignify the ſame Things; there ore theſe words are, in this reſpect, Arbitrary Signs, which by themſelves have no ſignification but by the Inſtitution of ſome free and rational Agent.

We may properly ſay then, that Words are neither Natural, nor Arbitrary Signs, (to take the Words *Natural* and *Arbitrary* in their ſtrict Senſe) but that they have ſomething of both. And the ſame may be ſaid of whatever regards the Analogy of *Tongues*, the Inflection of *Nouns* and *Verbs*, their Pronunciations and Terminations; for all theſe things might have been turn'd quite otherwiſe, ſince it was not by any deliberation of the Will, that they came to be turn'd as they are. *I have Loved*, for inſtance, might have ſignify'd that, which is intended by, *I ſhall Love*; and what denotes the *Maſculine*, might have as well denoted the *Feminine Gender*, *&c.* becauſe in this Caſe Man did, without any reflection, determine, that one ſhould denote the *Time paſt*, the other the *Time to come*, and that ſuch an Article ſhould demonſtrate the *Maſculine* and ſuch another the *Feminine Gender*: All which is the pure effect of certain conjunction of Cauſes, that Human Wiſdom has no way directed.

We muſt except however certain General Rules, which can never change, becauſe they are abſolutely grounded upon Nature; Such as the Rules for the Conſtruction of *Nouns* with *Verbs*, and the *Nouns* with one another. Becauſe without theſe Rules, Converſation would

ſignify

ſignify nothing; For Words being the Expreſſion of Thoughts, and Thoughts conſiſting in the Union or Separation of certain Ideas; thoſe Ideas ſhou'd appear either united or ſeparated in Diſcourſe, otherwiſe they cannot repreſent our Thoughts. The *Poſition* of *Words* may be comprehended under theſe Rules, for it is no way indifferent to place them as we will.

All the Rules then, which regard the Order of our Ideas, are ſo Eſſential to Diſcourſe, that they are found neceſſary in all *Tongues:* they depend not on the Caprice or Fancy of Men, but are as Natural to a Language, as it is for Fire to produce Smoak. And in this manner may be reconcil'd the different Opinions which Men have had of Language. It depends on Nature in thoſe Rules which cannot change, according to the Philoſopher *Hermogenes* in *Plato*; and ſo according to the Stoicks 'tis Natural: And it depends on the fancy of Men, in things which do change; And ſo, according to the Philoſopher *Cratylus* in *Plato*, and according to *Arnobius*, and the whole Croud of Grammarians, it is Arbitrary: And this is the diſtinction, whereon I ground my Opinion.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Perfection of the first Tongue.

IT may not perhaps in this place be amiss to treat of the Perfection of the first *Tongue*; since we may the better know thereby, wherein the perfection of others consists; and since the Arguments on this Subject have hitherto been so very imaginary and uncertain.

I for my part am of Opinion, that we need not doubt, but that the first *Tongue* had, from its very Origin, all the Beauties whereof *Tongues* are capable. For as *Adam* wanted no one perfection which his Nature cou'd require, having as full a knowledge of all Arts and Sciences, and that in as exalted a degree, as Man cou'd possess: So we may rest satisfy'd that the *Tongue*, which he spoke, was no way deficient. That is to say, that as *Adam* could talk upon all sorts of Subjects with all possible Eloquence, we ought to believe that the *Tongue*, he spake, could furnish him with all sorts of Terms, that were necessary to express himself with such Eloquence.

He could have us'd all sorts of Stiles, and I need not scruple to say, but, that he did use them. For can we make any doubt, but that he Instructed his Children, first, in all things they were to do, or in what he thought necessary for them to know, in order to Merit the Protection of God; after that in all Arts and Sciences: And in a word, in all that he knew, of what was either past, present, or to come? Can we doubt, but that he endeavour'd to render all that he said

ſaid agreeable to them? Or that he did not employ all the Force, Strength, and Sublimity of his Language, to make them comprehend the Great and Terrible Truths, which he taught them? The bare Quality of a Father, may ſuffice to aſſure us of this; Paternal Tenderneſs could not fail of giving ſufficient Inſtructions, and this was ſo much greater in the firſt Man, as he was the Cauſe of the Miſery of his Children, and therefore the Sentiments of Nature prompted him to teach them all the neceſſary Methods to mollify and diminiſh that Miſery, which he brought upon them.

And what Man ever had ſuch Subjects for the *great* or *ſublime*? The Creation of the Univerſe, his own Formation by God's Hand, his Happineſs in the ſtate of Innocence, his Condemnation, his Fall, and in *his*, that of all Human Race; the Severities of God's Juſtice in the Condemnation of the Wicked, the effects of his Compaſſion in his Redemption of Human kind, and of the Felicity of his Elect to Eternity; What can be found comparable to theſe things in all the Writings of Prophane Authors? And who, beſides himſelf, could have ſpoke with ſo feeling a Senſe of them as he, who had, by his Crime, ſo great a ſhare in the one, and was the firſt that by Grace received the Revelation of the other? If *Quintilian* ſaid nothing was more juſt, than that we ſhou'd teach others, what we ourſelves know, *Adam* had yet much ſtronger Obligations: For what he ow'd to God, what to his Children, and what to all Mankind, obliged him to teach them all that he had learn'd of God, and to engage them, by the moſt powerful Arguments,

Arguments, to a Belief and Practice of all the Truths, whereof he inform'd them. *Quid honeſtius quam docere, quod optime ſcias?* Is there not then, reaſon to believe, that the *Tongue* which he ſpoke was as rich and eloquent as a *Tongue* could be?

'Tis a probable Conjecture of ſome Learned Men, that *Hebrew* was in its higheſt perfection in the Times of *David* and *Solomon*. Their Opinions may be True, if we underſtand them, with regard to what this *Tongue* was after the Time of *Adam*. (For I ſuppoſe, as there is great reaſon to believe, notwithſtanding the Conjectures of ſome Moderns, that *Hebrew* was the *Tongue*, which *Adam* ſpake) yet I am perſuaded, that this *Tongue* was much fallen away from its firſt perfection by the barbarity of Men, who, taken up with their Neceſſities, and tranſported by their Paſſions, neglected almoſt all the Arts and Sciences; and by this Negligence loſt the moſt exquiſite Beauties and Perfections of their *Tongue*. In a word, their *Tongue* became as barbarous as their Manners; but it began to retrieve a part of what it loſt, when the People of God began to live in regular Society: And there is a great probability, that in the times of *David* and *Solomon*, when that People was in its greateſt proſperity, the *Tongue* was alſo in the greateſt ſplendor it had, ſince its firſt decay. Tho' I cannot believe that it recover'd, in thoſe Times, all the richneſs which it had in its Origin, unleſs we will have it, that *Solomon* had all the Knowledge of *Adam*, which I cannot believe, and which there is not room to believe, though the Scriptures attribute ſo great an abundance to him.

Some

Some have thought that the *Hebrew* once had ſo great an Energy, that Names expreſs'd the Nature of Things, and were like ſo many abridg'd Definitions; Inſomuch, that, according to their Opinion, it was only requir'd to underſtand that *Tongue* well, and become a moſt excellent Philoſopher. But here I think they ſtretch its excellence a little too far; and attribute to it, what no *Tongue* can have. For I cannot comprehend that one ſimple Word ſhou'd expreſs the Nature of a Thing, otherwiſe than by reaſon of the accidental Union of the Idea of that Thing to that Word. For if it were ſo, the Words which conſtitute that *Tongue*, wou'd be ſo many Natural Signs, and have a neceſſary Connexion with the Thing it ſelf, which we cannot ſee to be any way poſſible.

If there are in this *Tongue* ſome Terms which ſignify things by themſelves, they are compos'd for that purpoſe, as thoſe of *Adam* and of *Eve*, and other like Terms; but ſimple Terms, which make up the Compoſition of others, ſignify nothing of themſelves, and are indifferent to all ſorts of ſignifications: If the Name *Adam* ſignifies *made of Earth*, and *Eve* the *Mother of all Living*, 'tis becauſe the one is compos'd of the Word which ſignifies *Earth*, and the other of that which ſignifies *Mother* and *Living*; but the Words which ſignify *Earth*, *Mother* and *Living*, might ſignify quite another thing, or any other ſorts of Sound might have been employ'd to ſignify theſe ſame things.

There is no *Tongue* but has a great Number of *Compound* Names, to ſignify certain Things, certain Trades, and certain Employments by, each

of

of us may every where find Examples of this kind: But we muſt know, at the ſame time, that *ſimple* Words, which are as the Elements of the *Compound*, have not in themſelves any value but what is given to them; nor do the Compounds naturally repreſent the Idea of Things they ſignify, but to thoſe only, who by their knowledge in the Language, underſtand the Primitives.

'Tis of theſe Compund Names alone, it may be ſaid, that, if we know them, we know the things (as *Plato*, * ſays, in his Dialogue of the reaſon of Names) for Simple Names cannot be known, unleſs the things be known before hand, as the ſame Philoſopher ſays again, which thing we cannot too much remark. So that Compound Names make known the Things, and the Things make known the ſimple Names.

It is ſaid in Scripture, that every Creature bore the Name which *Adam* gave it, *Gen.* 2. 19. But this does not in the leaſt ſignify that the Name expreſs'd its Nature; and thoſe that underſtand this Paſſage in this Senſe, would, in my Opinion, find in it a meaning which it no wiſe has. Poſſibly their prepoſſeſſion may be grounded upon what ſome Philoſophers (as *Plato* in the aforemention'd Book, and *Pythagoras*, as *Cicero* reports) have thought, *viz.* that the Impoſition of Names was the work of a Sovereign Wiſdom. Upon this Foundation Chriſtian Philoſophers have thought that God, who certainly is the Sovereign Wiſdom, inſpir'd *Adam* with Names, which carry'd in them the imprinted Notion of Things, and perfectly deſcrib'd their

* *In Cratylo.*

their Nature; becauſe God who knew perfectly their Nature, cou'd not have fail'd to inſpire *Adam* with ſuch Names as he thought proper. This is what the *Hebrews* think, or, to ſpeak more properly, the *Caballiſts* and *Rabbins*. But I confeſs, I have not Senſe enough to comprehend this Thought; nor can I ſee any other reaſon for the ſignification of Names, than the will of him who impos'd them, I mean *ſimple* Names; if there is any other, 'tis a Myſtery which human underſtanding cannot Penetrate.

Criticks indeed produce many Examples to ſhew that the firſt Names of Animals ſignify'd in themſelves their Nature. According to them, Beaſts are called *Brutes*, becauſe they are ſtupid and cannot ſpeak, *Bruta à ſilentio & ſtupore*; the Camel is ſo call'd, becauſe he is vindictive, *Camelus à rependendo, quod eſt injuriarum memor*; The Hawk takes its Name from the ſubtility of its Eye-ſight; The Pelican, from its vomiting the Nouriſhment which it takes; *Milvus à viſu acutiſſimo, Pelicanus à vomitu*, and ſo of the reſt, as may be found among the Criticks.

But thoſe Examples prove nothing againſt what I ſay; for tho' it ſhould be true, that theſe Compound Names, ſhould in effect ſignify, what thoſe Criticks would have them, which cannot be much aſcertain'd; yet ſtill they would ſo ſignify, upon the pure Score of their Compoſition; and to underſtand them, it would be neceſſary to find out the ſignification of the ſimple words which compos'd them. But ſince it is plain that thoſe ſimple words ſignify in themſelves, neither *ſilence*, nor *ſtupidity*, nor *vengeance*, nor *vomiting*, nor *ſubtile ſight*; Then that which ought

ought to be prov'd is to demonſtrate, that the Terms of the firſt *Tongue* do in themſelves ſignify the Nature of Things.

Even the ineffable Name of God, as compos'd of ſo many Letters, ſignifies nothing, but by the force of its Compoſition; and there is no *Tongue*, wherein as much may not be done. Had God been pleas'd to Inſpire *Adam* with the Language we ſpeak, he might have given himſelf, in *French*, a Name anſwerable to that which he call'd himſelf in *Hebrew*; and the like may be ſaid of all other impos'd Names.

If the Names, which I have been mentioning, did in reality ſignify what the Criticks pretend, *Adam*, by impoſing them, has intimated ſomething of the Nature of thoſe Animals.

I ſay ſomething (for the bare knowledge of what thoſe Names Import is not to be accounted ſo great an acquiſition) but it is more likely that Criticks have found out ſuch ſignifications in theſe *Hebrew* Names, merely becauſe they had the knowledge of the Things themſelves elſewhere; For if we have any certainty of the ſignification of *Hebrew* Names, it is only of ſuch, as the Scripture it ſelf explains to us.

The ſignification of Words cannot be better comprehended than by the manner of computing Figures: Theſe Figures, 1, 2, 3, do not in themſelves denote either, One, Two, or Three, but only becauſe the will of Man wou'd have it ſo. But then, ſuppoſing that Men had been willing that their amount ſhou'd be Ten times more, at every Station they advance from the Right to the Left, then theſe

Three Figures, 1, 2, 3, join'd together, would neceſſarily come to One hundred and Twenty three. This is *Plato*'s Compariſon; who after he had thoroughly examin'd for the Reaſon of Names, in his *Cratylus*, was at laſt conſtrain'd to ſit down with this perſwaſion, that they are no otherways to be accounted for, than Figures.

It may be ſaid that God (who, according to what I have advanc'd, was in reality the Author of the firſt *Tongue*, and being incapable of doing any thing but by his Sovereign Wiſdom) wanted not power to impart Names and their Reaſon along with them: And this is what *Plato* ſays in the Dialogues ſo often cited, *viz.* That to cut ſhort the many Difficulties, about the Impoſition of Names, we muſt have recourſe to Divinity, and ſay, that Names were wiſely given, becauſe given by the Gods.

I acknowledge that the Sovereign Wiſdom, which preſides in all the Works of God, did alſo preſide in the *Tongue*, wherewith he inſpir'd *Adam*; but the Reaſons, which he had to Inſpire him with that *Tongue*, rather than another, cannot be known to us; and 'tis a great Temerity, and unprofitable amuſement to ſearch into it, as the *Caballiſts* do, who attribute the Miracles of *Moſes* and the *Prophets* to the Efficacy of certain Names in it. 'Tis apparently in conformity to the Sentiments of the Cabal, whereof *Plato* was not Ignorant, that he endeavours, in his *Cratylus*, to diſcover the Natural reaſons of Names; at leaſt it may be ſuppos'd that he did not ſeek for the Etymology of the Names of the Heroes and Gods, whereof *Homer* makes ſuch mention, but to imitate *Moſes*, who

who gives Reaſons for the Names of almoſt all the Men, whoſe Geneology he has wrote.

But without aſcribing to this *Tongue* an Energy, which it never had, and which I apprehend no other *Tongue* ever could have, there is ſtill no reaſon to ſay, but it had all the Force, all the Richneſs, and, in a word, all the Excellence whereof a *Tongue* is capable, and that even from its firſt beginning: And in this it differs from all other *Tongues*, which do not arrive to their Perfection, but by long uſe, and the ſtudy of Arts and Sciences.

Some Men are of Opinion that this *Tongue* is Barren, but their allegations are without reaſon. The Truth is, as we have but one Book in this *Tongue*, and that wrote with no other Deſign, than to render us knowing in our Religion, and to Edify us in Piety; this Book can preſerve but a very ſmall part of the Terms and manner of Diction us'd in that *Tongue*, and conſequently, cannot acquaint us with all the Excellence and Richneſs of it. But it cannot therefore be ſaid to be barren, becauſe all its Beauties and Perfections are not known to us.

Even the Criticks themſelves, with all their Penetration and Study, know it only by means of this one Book; and by what knowledge they acquire therein, they cannot conclude with any certainty what this *Language* originally was in it ſelf. For Example, if in this Book we find a great confuſion of *Tenſes* in the *Verbs*, we cannot reaſonably conclude that it was the ſame thing in ordinary Diſcourſe, or in ſuch other Books, as were wrote in that *Tongue*, as thoſe of the Books of the *Chronicles*, and of the Reigns of the Kings of *Iſrael* and *Juda*. For

by what method could Men have underſtood each other, if they had expreſs'd the *time paſt* like the *preſent* or the *future*, and if they had indifferently uſed all the *Tenſes* alike? If things are thus in the Scripture, 'tis becauſe the Book is Prophetick, and the Stile thereof ſo peculiar to it ſelf, that it can no way be accommodated to any other. It may be judg'd by this Reflection, whether we may, with any ſhew of Reaſon, boaſt of our knowledge in the *Hebrew Tongue*, or diſcourſe pertinently of its Nature by ſuch Notions, as the Scriptures furniſh us with.

But, in fine, let us except this *Tongue* from the common Rules, ſince God has been pleas'd to uſe it for Deſigns, wherein he did not think fit to employ others. It is all Divine in its Origin, all Myſterious, and all Prophetick in its end: And we ſhou'd therefore think it to be above the Spirit, Force, and Grandure of all other *Tongues*; nor muſt we uſe whatſoever we find Extraordinary and Supernatural in this *Tongue* as rules to reaſon upon the reſt.

Thus have we ſhewn that the firſt *Tongue* was given by * God. Let us now ſee how all the reſt came from the firſt, whether the Modern ones are Derivatives, as ſome aſſert, or Originals, as ſome other Learned Men believe.

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* *Vulat.* 1. *Proleg. Them. de l' Origine des Langues.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Multiplication of Tongues, *and their Changes.*

BEFORE the building of the Tower of *Babel*, all Mankind ſpoke but one *Tongue*, and that was the firſt which was ſpoke: Nor can we doubt but that, had they not ſined, they would have ſpoke but that *Tongue* alone, becauſe at that time, they being perfectly united to God, and among themſelves, would, in effect, but have compos'd one Family; and it was for no other end, but to puniſh their Pride and Diſobedience, that God made them Barbarous to one another, by confounding their *Language*; that is to ſay, by multiplying their *Tongues*, in ſuch ſort, that they could not underſtand one another.

We muſt not however believe that each Man ſpoke a particular *Language*, the Number being ordinarily fix'd to Seventy two; and which was much about the Number of the principal Families, which, at that time, compos'd the whole Race of Mankind; Inſomuch, that each Family began to have its particular *Tongue*. But in regard to this Number, every one may follow his own Conjecture. It was however the diverſity of *Languages* which hinder'd thoſe Men from continuing their haughty Deſign, and obliged them to ſeparate, and go to inhabit different Countries: And from this Diſperſion of theirs the World became peopled.

It was then at the Tower of *Babel* that Men became barbarous, that is to ſay, Strangers and unacquainted with one another's Language, and alſo incapable of Mutual Aſſiſtance and Intelligence, as the Apoſtle in theſe Words ſhews us, (1. *Cor.* 14. 2.) *Therefore if I know not the Meaning of the Voice, I ſhall be unto him that ſpeaketh a Barbarian, and he that ſpeaketh ſhall be a Barbarian unto me.* And God threatning his People with a hard and tedious Captivity, (*Deut.* 28.) tells them *that he will make them Slaves to a People, whoſe Language they ſhall not underſtand.* For 'tis the Difference of *Languages* which render Men barbarous to one another, as I have ſhewn above.

But we muſt now examine how theſe new *Tongues* came to be form'd: My Sentiments are, that God diſpos'd the Organs of Men at that time in ſuch a Manner, that when they endeavour'd to pronounce thoſe Words which they were accuſtom'd to before, the Words differ'd ſo very much from their uſual Pronunciation, that they did not in the leaſt denote the Things they intended to utter; ſo that thoſe, whoſe *Language* God was pleas'd to change, did in the Articulation of their Voice, form Words entirely new, and contrary to their ancient *Tongue*. And thus continuing to articulate their Voices in a new and unheard of manner each time they ſpake, they, at laſt, made themſelves a new *Tongue*: For all their Ideas became joyn'd to the Terms of this new *Tongue*, inſtead of being joyn'd to the Terms of *that* which they ſpoke before. And there is room to believe, that they ſo far forgot their ancient *Tongue*, as not to remember that ever they had ſpoke it, nor did they perceive the

the Change any other way, but that they did not underſtand one another as uſual.

Thus I conceive this Change was brought about. And ſuppoſing the Power of God over all his Creatures, I do not herein ſee any extraordinary Myſtery, nor why the *Rabbies* * ſo much tormented themſelves to find out the Cauſe of this Change, nor, in ſhort, that there is any Neceſſity to have recourſe to Faith, as ſome *Divines* pretend; unleſs they will have it, that we can, no otherwiſe than by Faith, know the Almighty Power of the Creator over his Creature.

As the *Tongue* which was firſt Spoke, came immediately from God, ſo did all *thoſe*, which were form'd at the Confuſion of *Babel*; ſince it was God himſelf who form'd them and all their Terms, by a ſpecial Direction of the Organs of the Voice of thoſe Men. But may we not ſay that all theſe new *Tongues* depended upon the Firſt, as the *Italian*, *Spaniſh*, *French*, and *Engliſh* depend on the *Latin*? Some believe it, and have undertaken to ſhew, that all *Tongues* are deriv'd from the *Hebrew*; and it muſt be own'd that their Reaſons have a very great probability. But this Queſtion is of no Importance to my Subject; 'tis enough for my Purpoſe that thoſe new *Tongues* were the Work of God, and not the Effect of human Prudence.

But if this Confuſion of *Tongues* was only the Puniſhment of thoſe, who were guilty of the inſolent Attempt in the Tower of *Babel*, if any then were innocent, the *Language* of all was not confounded. And many of the Fathers

* *Umalt. 1. in leg. 7.*

and Interpreters are of Opinion that the ancient *Tongue* was preſerv'd in the Family of *Heber*, who did not, like the reſt, conſpire in this raſh and impious Undertaking; ſo that the firſt *Tongue*, which till then had no Name, did now begin to take that of *Heber*, in order to diſtinguiſh it from the reſt, and 'twas only he whoſe Family retain'd it: But tho' this Etymology be ſorely conteſted, yet the beſt Criticks find it the moſt likely to be true.

When *Tongues* were once thus multiply'd miraculouſly, they did not long reſt in their firſt Multiplication; but went on, as it were naturally to multiply into ſo many, that we can now neither know nor count the Number of them.

The firſt Diviſion of *Tongues*, occaſion'd the firſt Diviſion of Mankind; and in its Turn, this firſt Diviſion of Mankind was the Cauſe of the Diviſion of *Tongues*; becauſe as Men daily divided themſelves more and more, ſo did their *Language* alſo. If at firſt there were but 72 Families, which made 72 Tribes or Collonies, how many Collonies have they multiply'd and divided themſelves into ſince that time by new Diviſions and Subdiviſions, and how many divided Collonies have united themſelves, and after that divided themſelves again?

But they did not only divide themſelves; they even changed their former into new *Tongues*, and entirely loſt the old. Many Cauſes were productive of theſe Changes: The firſt was the Change of Climate; for the Temperature of the Air, influencing the Conſtitution of Men, and conſequently making a Change in the Organs of the Voice and of the Hearing, muſt neceſſarily cauſe a Change in the Pronunciation of Letters and Words,

Words, as well as the Terminations; and thoſe Changes of the Pronunciation and Termination at laſt produc'd that of the *Tongue* entirely. Thus the firſt Colonies being divided into others, who went and ſojourn'd into different Climates and diſtant Countries, changed their old *Tongues* by little and little into new Ones; for the Change or Tranſpoſition of Letters will, in proceſs of time, cauſe alſo a Change in *Languages*.

A Second Cauſe of the Change of *Tongues*, is a Mixture, which thoſe divided People made, whether by the Conqueſts they obtain'd over one another, or by their Tranſmigrations, and Commerce: Thus from the ancient *Tongue*, ſo mix'd and confounded, theſe People compos'd themſelves divers new ones. And in the ſame manner it will conſtantly happen from the ſtrong propenſity Men have to imitate one another; and in order to unite themſelves, they will uſe each others *Tongues* inſenſibly, without ſo much as making any Reflection.

A Third Cauſe of this Change, is the Inconſtancy of Man. It might be thought that a *Tongue* ſhould always be the ſame in a State, which, for a long Series of time, keeps itſelf free from the Mixture of any other Nation: Yet we ſee by daily Experience, that Words and Expreſſions grow obſolete, that others inſenſibly take place, and that the Tyranny of the Mode carries a Sway as well in *Languages*, as in Cloaths and Furniture. The Complaiſance which Men have for one another, and their ſtrange Love of Novelty, changes an ancient *Tongue* inſenſibly I ſay, and gives Birth to another quite different, tho' frequently call'd by the old Name. As we at preſent ſpake a *Tongue* that is quite another thing

thing to that which was ſpoken Three or Four Hundred Years ago, notwithſtanding which, we ſtill call it *French*.

Thus all the firſt *Tongues* almoſt entirely loſt themſelves in new Ones; and tho', by the Secret of Etymologick Art, we find means to ſhew a reſemblance between the *New* and the *Old* in many things; yet the reſemblance is ſo very weak and inconſiderable, that if a *Frenchman* who dy'd Three Hundred Years ago, ſhould now come to Life again, we ſhould not, at this time, underſtand one another.

Theſe Changes are the neceſſary Effects of Inconſtancy, in Men, of the tranſitory things of this World, of People, and of Empires, and nothing can prevent them. Nor can the Mutabilty of theſe things be any way withſtood by the ſtrongeſt Efforts, which the moſt Learned and prudent Men of any Age are able to make.

Dictionaries themſelves cannot redreſs this Evil: They may indeed tranſmit to Poſterity a good part of the Knowledge of our preſent *Language*, but they cannot hinder it from feeling the Impreſſion of Time, from growing old, and at laſt from giving way to ſome other. In ſhort, is it not enough that Living *Tongues* depend on Cuſtom to be aſſur'd that nothing can prevent their Change, ſince it is ſo certain, that Cuſtom is nothing elſe but one perpetual Change?

When we arrive at ſuch a Point of Perfection, as to acquire what we call *Simple* and *Natural*, we grow weary, as in Faſhions: What we firſt ſought in Perukes was *Commodious* and *Natural*, but we were no ſooner arriv'd to that, than we wanted what was *vain* and *luxuriant*, which carry'd us far from what was *Commodious* and *Natural*.

ral. This is what Man does in every thing, and what will always happen in Living *Languages.*

The late Mr. *Menage* ſaid, that he had ſtudy'd his *Tongue* for Fifty Years, and yet did not know it; it was becauſe he ſaw it change, and whatever is Mutable is not indeed a Matter of Science; for that which we once knew, being no more what it was, our Knowledge of it vaniſhes with it.

Theſe Changes happen'd even, in part, to the firſt *Tongue.* For I cannot believe, that the *Hebrew,* in the time of *Moſes,* was entirely the ſame with what it was in the time of *Adam,* or even of the Patriarchs *Abraham, Iſaac,* and *Jacob*; becauſe (without ſpeaking of what it had loſt of its Abundance) there was much time elapſed ſince its Birth, and it had paſs'd into too many different Climates, and mix'd among too many different Nations, not to have ſuffer'd ſome part of the Changes, which accrew to all other Things.

Some will tell us that the *Chineſe Tongue* was a conſiderable time without changing, but this is very difficult to be credited. The *Chineſe* are Men, and conſequently inconſtant as other Men are, ſince the Inconſtancy of Man is the Effect of that Corruption, which infected all Mankind. But if thoſe who would perſwade us to credit this Paradox, would be pleaſed to inform us, why this *Tongue,* after having continued ſo long in the ſame State, ſhould at laſt come to change; we might perhaps perceive, that the Cauſes of the Change being no ways new, there could be no Reaſon to think but they had acted before, rather than that the Viciſſitude of the Things of this World had been ſuſpended, for a time, in favour of that *Tongue.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Perfection, and Decay of Tongues.

THE Changes, whereof I have now treated, are no way influenc'd by the Prudence of Men; they are brought about by a certain Chain of Cauſes, ordain'd by the Providence of God for ends, which are impoſſible for Man to penetrate. But there are others which properly are the Works of Man's Abilities and great Induſtry, and theſe are the Changes which are made in the Amendment and Advancement of *them* towards Perfection. 'Tis thus the *Greeks* and *Romans* chang'd their *Tongues*, by enriching *them* with many Terms, by poliſhing their Conſtruction, and ennobling *them* with many figurative, Sublime, and Magnificent Expreſſions, and in fine, by forming them Stiles proper for all ſorts of Subjects; for 'tis by Sciences, and the knowledge of Arts, that *Tongues*, are embelliſh'd. Thus perhaps the *Chaldeans*, and *Ægyptians* firſt did in their *Tongues* what the *Greeks* and *Romans* afterward did in *Latin* and *Greek*; and there is reaſon enough to believe it, ſince the former ſo very much cultivated Arts and Sciences, that it was from them that the *Grecians* went to ſeek *them*. But little or nothing of thoſe *Tongues* remaining now with us, we cannot talk of them but by Conjecture.

The *Jews* I believe cannot pretend to much on this account; they very little cultivated any Sciences, and were too much taken up with the Cere-

Ceremonies of their Religion. This was a weight that cruſh'd and ſunk the groſſer ſort of them, and depriv'd them even of leiſure to think of any thing elſe; and all their Men of Wit and beſt Parts neglected, nay even diſpis'd all Sciences, addicting themſelves wholly to the Spiritual Senſe hid under the Letter of the Law, and to the hopes and expectance of a Meſſiah, without ſo much as talking of the Neceſſaries of Life.

In effect then, it is no other way, than by improvement that *Tongues* attain their perfection, and the People, which advance them to this perfection, muſt conſequently grow Civil and Polite, whereunto the knowledge of the Arts and Sciences do very much contribute: For the more they advance their Knowledge, the more their *Language* will become enrich'd; ſince the diſcoveries of new Matters and new Truths, muſt in proportion multiply Terms neceſſary to expreſs them. For the greatneſs and excellence of Things is neceſſarily follow'd by that of *Language*, without much Application or Labour.

But now *Arts* and *Sciences* flouriſh no where ſo well as in ſettl'd and eſtabliſh'd Governments, whoſe People live in regular Society, in the long enjoyment of undiſturb'd Peace, and, by wholeſome Laws, ſecur'd from the violence of other States; and provided with all the Neceſſaries of Life. For Study is the proper Province of a People uninterrupted by the neceſſity of defending themſelves, and undiſquieted by the trouble of ſeeking Succors elſewhere. * *Eloquence* (ſays *Cicero*)

* *De claris Orat.*

Cicero) *is the Companion of Leiſure and Tranquility, and the fruit of a Solidly-eſtabliſh'd Government:* For which reaſon we muſt expect, neither much Eloquence, nor many Sciences, amongſt ſuch Nations, as are always in War, and who cannot live but by the Spoil of their Neighbours. But whenſoever we ſee a People in the full enjoyment of Peace, and of all things needful to Human Life, then ſhall we ſee the Spirit of Curioſity begin to exert it ſelf, and making reſearches into the Arts and Sciences, be it merely for its own Entertainment, or to entertain others. * *No ſooner are we free, and unburthen'd from the knotty Cares, and intricate Affairs of ordinary Life* (ſays *Cicero*) *but we endeavour to See, and Learn, and Underſtand ſomething New.*

Thus all the Advances, which Men make in Sciences, ariſe at firſt from the Natural Inclination they have to attain Knowledge; whether they come to the Knowledge of the Principles thereof by Reflection and Meditation in themſelves, or receive them by tradition from their Fathers: Yet ſtill they draw from theſe Principles, the certain Truths which they contain; and by that means raiſe the Edifice of *Sciences*, which cannot be done without Elaborate Diſcourſes; and conſequently the *Language* muſt at the ſame time be Embelliſh'd and Enrich'd with great Numbers of Terms and Expreſſions entirely new.

Thus the *Grecians* did, when they had acquir'd a conſtant and ſettled form of Government, wherein they felt the pleaſing ſweets of Peace; and they no ſooner had receiv'd the Art of

* *Offic.* 1.

of Writing, but they began to apply themſelves to Study, and being perſwaded that the People, who knew that Art before themſelves, could not fail of firſt having, and knowing the Sciences, they even travel'd to *Egypt*, to *Phenicia*, to *Chaldea* and *Jeruſalem*, to learn of thoſe People whatſoever they knew. This the Hiſtories of the firſt *Grecian Philoſophers* do ſhew us, as it is alſo diſcover'd in their Principles, which do all ſavour of what they learn'd of the *Hebrews*.

There was from the earlieſt Times, amongſt the *Cananites*, a City, called the City of Letters, *Cariatſepher*; and we need not doubt but that it was ſo call'd from its being the place where Letters were Taught, and conſequently where the Sciences were cultivated; and from thence they ſpread themſelves amongſt all the neighbouring Nations.

But as Sciences did not ariſe to the higheſt degree of their Perfection all on a ſudden, ſo Languages crept on but ſlowly; for the Progreſs of theſe, is, by a long Series of Years, and, as it were, inſenſibly brought about: So that a State muſt continue for a conſiderable time in the ſame quiet condition to effect it. It was the long continuance of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Government which gave time to perfect their *Tongues*: But when theſe had acquir'd all that this People were capable of doing to perfect them, they ſoon begun to change and decay, by the Force of the Cauſes above-mentioned, which contribute to the Change of *Tongues*, and from which no one *Tongue* can defend it ſelf. The truth is, they are all effectually dead and gone; and others have taken their place in the Commerce of Life; And if at this time

we

we know any thing of them, 'tis only by the means of Books: *i. e.* we only know them in part, for it is no more poſſible for writing to preſerve all the Beauties of a *Tongue*, the Senſe and true Meaning of all the Words, nor the Energy and Nobleneſs of all the Expreſſions, than it is for Painting to repreſent all the Movements of the Mind, and Beauties of the Body. In a word, as Books do not treat of all, ſo neither do they preſerve all the Terms, nor all the Forms of Speech neceſſary in a *Tongue*: We are not therefore to think, that we have as thorough Knowledge of theſe *Tongues*, as either had *Ariſtotle* or *Cicero*.

I have ſaid, that theſe *Tongues* received all the Perfection and Excellence, that the *Grecians* and *Romans* were capable of giving them: Becauſe theſe People were not enlightened then with many Sciences, which Men ſince their times have been: To mention but thoſe of the Myſteries of our Religion, its Diſcipline and Morals, without ſpeaking of many other Sciences and Arts, which we perfectly know, but were never known to them. Theſe *Tongues* then in the moſt perfect State, and greateſt Excellence, whereunto the *Pagans* had brought them, ſtill wanted very many things, which they have ſince acquir'd, even tho' they be dead, for they have been enrich'd with many new Terms, and Forms of Speech, which neither *Ariſtotle* nor *Cicero* had any knowledge of.

At this time the *Greek* and *Latin* are dead *Tongues*, which are uſed no more in the civil commerce of Life, and only obſerv'd in Sciences and Religion. Such is the fate of all human Things, and of *Tongues* as well as the reſt; they receive

receive Birth, Form themſelves, and become perfect; and they no ſooner arrive at a certain ſtate of perfection, but they begin to decline, and go off to their end.

But tho' it be true, that Learned Men, who Cultivate the Sciences, do enrich their *Tongues* with great numbers of new Words, which they are oblidg'd to introduce, in order to make them capable of expreſſing all that they know; yet theſe Learned Men do not make theſe Words at hap-hazard, nor draw them from their own capricious Imagination, but they borrow them from other *Tongues*, either Living or Dead, which have terms proper to expreſs their Thoughts in, or they take them from their own *Tongue*, and gave them another ſignification.

It cannot be ſaid however, that theſe terms are properly the Invention of Men: They do nothing in this Caſe, but appropriate them to their own *Tongue*, take them from a Language wherein they ſtood, and extend their ſignification beyond their common acceptation, by reaſon of ſome ſort of Reſemblance to things, that were unknown and undiſcovered before.

In this manner, whatever the Induſtry or Wiſdom of Man may add to *Tongues*, does not change or alter the Syſtem which I have above propos'd; *viz.* that *Tongues*, properly ſpeaking, are not of human Inſtitution; ſince the *new* always form themſelves on the Ruins, Corruptions, Alterations, and Mixtures of the *old*; nor is any word in any *Tongue* whatſoever to be found, that is totally the Work or Invention of Man. 'Tis only Naturals and Changelings that form Sounds intirely New, and which they utter and pronounce they know not

why. But I ſhall have occaſion to ſay more upon this head, when I come more particularly to treat of the manner of forming new Words to render *Tongues* more abundant.

CHAP. VIII.

When a Tongue *is arriv'd to its utmoſt perfection, and when intirely loſt.*

WHAT has hitherto been ſaid ſhews, that it is no more poſſible for a Nation to become Learned without poliſhing and enriching their *Tongue*, than for a Workman to become an expert Maſter in all manner of Handicraft Trades, and capable to finiſh all ſorts of Mechanick Works, without Multiplying the Number of Tools. For in ſhort, to become knowing, we muſt not only have juſt Ideas of Things; but we muſt alſo reaſon upon thoſe Ideas, and deduce Conſequences from Principles: and all this cannot be done without joining Sounds to thoſe Ideas; Since Man, being compos'd of an Internal Soul and an External Body, cannot act with any regularity, except the Operations of both depend upon each other; for which reaſon we find, that when, by Meditation, he makes a Diſcovery of any new Truth, or new Idea, he immediately cloaths it with a ſenſible Sign, in order to fix it upon his Imagination, or lodge it in his Memory; without this he cou'd apply it to no purpoſe; it wou'd

wou'd be but a tranſient glimering, and a matter whereof he hath but ſmall Remembrance.

There is then a neceſſity, that the faculty of ſpeaking ſhou'd keep equal pace, with that of thinking, and that wiſdom ſhould always be accompany'd with Eloquence, as with a faithful Servant, as St. * *Auguſtin* ſaith. And *Cicero*, ſomewhere ſays, that Eloquence is nothing elſe but Wiſdom, excelling in a Copiouſneſs of Expreſſion. *Eloquentia nihil eſt aliquid, quam Copioſè Loquens ſapientia.* It is hardly to be imagin'd then, that a People ſhould make any great progreſs in the Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, without accuſtoming themſelves to ſpeak with *Purity*, with *Elegance*, with *Energy*, and even with much *Sublimity* and *Magnificence*. With *Purity*, to give Exact and Concile Ideas of ſuch Truths as they know; with *Energy*, to enforce all the ſtrength of their Thoughts; with *Elegance*, *Sublimity*, and *Magnificence* to make others Conceive the ſame Eſteem and Love, which they themſelves have for thoſe Truths: And all this is nothing elſe but perfecting their own *Tongue*, and making it more Polite and Eloquent.

We may aſſure ourſelves then, that a *Tongue* has attain'd the higheſt Degree of Perfection that *Tongues* are capable of, if thoſe who ſpeak it have diſcover'd, in the Arts and Sciences, all that is permitted Human Wiſdom to find out. On this Account we may certainly ſay, that as this Extent of Knowledge was not found but in *Adam* alone, ſo his *Tongue* of all others was

* *De doctrin. Chriſt.*

that which wanted no one Perfection, and among preſent *Tongues* that which wants the leaſt of Perfection, muſt be eſteem'd the moſt perfect. This want of Perfection however is not occaſion'd in any *Tongue* by its unfitneſs to receive Perfection, but is rather owing to the Knowledge of Men, which is ordinarily ſo limited: For there is not any one *Tongue*, but what might have ſerv'd *Adam* to expreſs all his Thoughts, and to reaſon upon all his lofty Subjects, altogether as well as in the *Hebrew*; if God had been pleas'd that *Adam* ſhould have ſpoke any other *Tongue*.

For this Reaſon I think it a great Raſhneſs to pretend to aſſure ourſelves that any *Tongue* beſides the firſt, is, or can become to its Perfection in ſuch Sort, as that there can be no hopes of adding any thing new to it, unleſs we prove that thoſe Men, to whom ſuch a *Tongue* is Natural, are in no Caſe Ignorant of all that Man can know or comprehend. Now I think this cannot be ſaid of any Nation, either *Greek* or *Roman*, nor even of the *French* themſelves, who pretend to be more Learned, than the *Greeks* and *Romans* were. The moſt Learned Nation may ſtill learn more, and can never arrive to a Knowledge, of all the Sciences which Human Nature is capable of.

The Growth of *Tongues* has no certain Bounds, any more than that of the Sciences. They decreaſe, and alter, before they are carry'd to the higheſt Point of their Perfection; inſomuch that it may be ſaid of them, as *Bodinus* ſays of Republicks, *viz.* that their Excellence cannot be known, till after their Declenſion, their Change, and their Ruin:

Ruin: For we could not have known, that the Language of *Auguſtus*'s time was preferable to that which was ſpoken before, and to that which was ſpoken ſince, but by the Changes which the *Latin* has undergone ſince the times of *Auguſtus*.

In fine, *Tongues* do change like States, before they acquire all the Splendour they are capable of; they decay to ſuch a Degree, that they ceaſe to live, and give way to others to take place in the Commerce of Life: But it is a difficult thing to know, when an Ancient *Tongue* is abſolutely extinguiſh'd, and when a new one ſucceeds it; that is to ſay, it is very hard to determine the Continuance or length of time which a *Tongue* has laſted, and perhaps impoſſible.

Tongues may be compar'd to Rivers which looſe themſelves in each other; and there is only this Difference, that we preciſely know where a River took its Appellation, how far it kept it, and where it loſt itſelf and its Name together; but we cannot do ſo in *Tongues*. The Ancient *French* loſt itſelf in that which we now ſpeak, but who can determine at what point of time our Anceſtors ceas'd to ſpeak the *Tongue* in uſe before what we now ſpeak, or at what point of time they began to ſpeak the *Tongue*, that is in preſent Uſe?

We muſt firſt know what it is that conſtitutes the Eſſential Difference between *Tongue* and *Tongue*. They are ordinarily I know diſtinguiſh'd into *Mother*, *Primitive*, or *Original Tongues*, and into *Dialects*; that is to ſay, into *Tongues* which proceed from the firſt, and are as it were their Daughters. Some will have it,

that the Mother *Tongues* have Eſſential Differences, which others want: But this Diſtinction is purely arbitrary, and does not give Notions ſufficiently precile and clear, of the Difference of *Tongues*. To ſpeak properly, all *Tongues* are Dialects of one only *Tongue*, which was the firſt, as Criticks maintain; nor is there leſs reaſon to ſay that all *Tongues* are the Offspring of the firſt, than to ſay that all Men are the Iſſue of the firſt Man. In truth if God had been pleas'd to have Created any other Man beſides *Adam*; to have made him Chief of another Race of Men, and to have given him another *Tongue* different from what he gave unto *Adam*, that *Tongue* would be really Original: But as there is no Man but what is deſcended of *Adam*, ſo there is no Original *Tongue* but that which he ſpoke; or thoſe which were form'd at the Tower of *Babel*, which are now no more. For what People can now be found, who really are the Offspring of any of thoſe Nations or Colonies, that took riſe from the Confuſion of *Babel*, and who have in themſelves continued ſo firmly united, ſo conſtant in their firſt Settlement, ſo uniform in their Cuſtoms, and ſo reſerv'd from all other Nations, that we may be aſſur'd they have not been ſubject to any of the Cauſes, which produce the Change of *Tongues*?

For myſelf, I am of Opinion, that there is no Diſtinction more remarkable in *Tongues*, than when People, who ſpeak theſe two *Tongues*, cannot underſtand one another, but muſt be obliged to ſtudy each other's *Tongue* in order to do it. For if *Tongues* are the Signs whereby the Thoughts of Men are generally communicated,

ted, then it follows that the *Tongues*, which are known, and us'd by one, but unknown, and of no uſe to the other in ſuch an Intercourſe, muſt have Eſſential Differences. Naturally a *Frenchman* cannot underſtand an *Italian*, nor an *Italian* a *Frenchman*; therefore the *Italian* and *French Tongues* do Eſſentially differ. I believe the Difference of *Tongues* cannot be remark'd by Notions more clear or preciſe: The Diſtinction of *Mother Tongues* and *Dialects* is of no certainty, neither is there any *Mother Tongue* ſo pure, but what has taken into it a great deal of other *Tongues*. *Hebrew* indeed is the only *Tongue* we find without any Mixture, which is a great Argument both of its Antiquity and Pre-eminence; but if all other *Tongues* are mix'd, why do People give them the Title of *Mother Tongues?*

It may be ſaid perhaps that theſe *Tongues* are leſs mix'd, than thoſe which we call *Dialects*, and that they have ſuch a peculiar Fund in themſelves, that they do not derive from any other; whereas the Dialects have elſewhere taken a great part of what they are. But it may be reply'd, that it is hard knowing how much they are mix'd; ſince we cannot know them ſufficiently to diſcern what is proper to themſelves, and what they have borrow'd from others. This eſcapes all the Learned; tho' their Erudition be never ſo profound, and the Penetration of their Genius be never ſo great, yet they will never arrive to a certainty in the Choice, nor clearly ſhew us one ſingle Word, which they can affirm was never taken from a more ancient *Tongue*, and from whence they, conſequentially may conclude that ſuch a *Tongue* is Original.

But where's the great Difference, whether, in the Conſtitution of a *Tongue*, Words be Originals, or whether they only be altered and diſguiſed by another *Tongue*; ſo long as the Diſguiſe and Alteration of thoſe Words renders them difficult to be known again, that is to ſay, as unintelligible as if they were all *New*. It would be more eaſy (ſome may ſay) to learn a *Tongue* which is but a Dialect of another, and of which our Natural *Tongue* may be alſo another Dialect: For Example, *Italian* and *French* which are Dialects of the *Latin*, are to ſuch Nations that ſpeak them, reciprocally eaſy to be underſtood.

But to this I anſwer that the greater or leſs facility to learn them, is nothing at all to the Eſſential Difference of *Tongues*. A Monkey is more like a Man than an Ox, and yet it is no leſs a Brute Animal than the Ox. So tho' it were more eaſy for a *Frenchman* to underſtand *Italian* than *High Dutch*, yet that is no Reaſon, but that the *Italian* is a *Tongue* Eſſentially different, as well from the *French*, as the *High Dutch*; ſince an *Italian* and a *Frenchman* are at firſt no way leſs Barbarous and Unintelligible to one another, than a *Frenchman* and a *High German*.

According to theſe Ideas, which to me appear the cleareſt, the moſt preceiſe, and the moſt diſtinct, the *Tongue*, which we at this Day ſpeak is Eſſentially different from that which was ſpoke by our Anceſtors Three Hundred Years ago. For if it ſhould be ſaid that our preſent *Tongue* is the ſame with that of thoſe Times, only in ſome meaſure made more polite, more ſoft, fluent, and harmonious, enrich'd with a great Number of Terms and Expreſſions;

preſſions; and therefore it follows that there is no other Difference between the Language of our preſent Times and that of our Anceſtors, than what is between a Precious Stone, as yet ſhapeleſs and rough, and the ſame Stone well cut and poliſh'd; yet all that can be ſaid on this Head will not deſtroy what I have advanc'd.

For in the firſt place, it is certain that *Tongues* do change into others, when the Pronunciation of the Letters and Syllables, the Terminations of Words, and the Inflexion of Nouns and Verbs are chang'd; when ancient Words are aboliſh'd, and new ones introduc'd, or when ancient Words are made to ſignify otherwiſe, than what they did before. Thus from ancient *Tongues* new ones do ariſe; and if the Politeneſs of our *Tongue* is produc'd in this manner, (as we may be eaſily convinc'd, if we would but compare the Language of *Vilchardoum* and *de Joinville* with our preſent *Tongue*) I do not ſee why the ancient *Tongue* ſhould not be quite different from what we now ſpeak, ſince new *Tongues* are only form'd by the aforeſaid Changes.

Secondly, it matters not what Cauſes they are, which produce the Change of a *Tongue*, whether it be Politeneſs or Barbarity, if after it is changed, thoſe, who ſpoke it naturally before, underſtand it no longer; for why ſhould Politeneſs be deficient in making a new *Tongue* any more than Barbarity, if Politeneſs can make as notable Changes therein, as Barbarity?

Thirdly, if we compare a *Tongue* to a Man who has paſt through all the different Ages of Life, as firſt his Infancy, ſecondly his Childhood, thirdly his Youth, fourthly his Virility, and afterwards creeps by a Gradual Declenſion into his Grave,

Grave, and yet notwithſtanding all this ſtill continues the ſame Man; I ſhould deſire that the time of the Birth of a *Tongue* ſhould be aſſign'd me in order to remark its Infancy, and afterwards all its other Ages. But this is what never can be done. It would follow likewiſe that *Tongues* ſhould be born and dye like Men, that it may be ſaid of them, this *Tongue* had Yeſterday no Exiſtence, but to day it has; this *Tongue* did exiſt Yeſterday, and to day it is no more. Farther it would follow, that the Growing *Tongue* ſhould be ingender'd from the deceas'd; for as Man cannot proceed but from Man, ſo *Tongues* cannot be born but of *Tongues*: And that this Change ſhould be made in ſuch manner as to make it unlike to what it was before; as a Daughter is oft unlike the Mother that gave her Birth, that is to ſay, that Men ſhould, in the Evening, ſpeak one Sort of *Tongue*, and the next Morning another entirely different. But all this is impoſſible.

Thus to ſpeak clearly and freely of Things, I ſay that *Tongues* do by an inſenſible Progreſs change, whether it be for better or worſe; and that when they are advanc'd to ſuch a State either of Perfection or Corruption, (which you pleaſe to call it) that thoſe who naturally ſpoke and underſtood them before, can neither underſtand nor ſpeak them any longer; then are they ſuppos'd to be New *Tongues*, and the Old Ones are no more: This is what heppen'd to the *Tongues* of our fore-Fathers, for to Day we do not underſtand them, and 'tis very probable they could not underſtand us: It follows then that they ſpoke a Language different from ours, and that we ſpeak a *Tongue* unlike theirs.

But

But how ſhall we call that, by which Men paſs from the *Old* to the *New*, for that is a *Tongue* as well as the others? It is compos'd of both, and one while retains more of one, another while more of another; but properly is neither one nor the other. For myſelf, I have neither Wiſdom nor Learning ſufficient to conceive certain and diſtinct Notions of all theſe Things, and I could wiſh that ſome of theſe great Criticks, from whom nothing is conceal'd, would be pleas'd to teach us what we are to think and how to expreſs ourſelves upon this Subject; for what I ſay in this Place, is leſs effectual to clear up theſe Matters, than to ſhew that I do not conceive how they can be clear'd up, and that conſequently there is nothing more unprofitable, than to attempt to make a Diſtinction in *Tongues*, and to aſſign them Bounds. The late M. *Menage* was wont to ſay that there was not, in all *Europe*, a Living *Tongue*, which exceeded the Date of Six Hundred Years; but he might with more Juſtice have ſaid, that no Living *Tongue* now in Uſe had a Being Six Hundred Years ago.

There are ſeveral Gloſſaries of the *mean* and *low* Latin, which give us to underſtand that *that Tongue* was ſometimes more and ſometimes leſs corrupted. But to know whether *low Latin* in Effect is *Latin* or not, we ſhould want ſome one of the ancient *Romans*, ſuch as *Virgil* or *Cicero*, to ſtep back, and ſee if they could underſtand that *Tongue*; if they could, we might ſay that in Effect it is *Latin*, but if they could not underſtand it, (as there is a ſufficient Reaſon to believe they could not) this then could not be *Latin*. In

ſhort

ſhort, Men equally call the Language which was ſpoken at *Rome* under the firſt Kings *Latin*, with what they call *low Latin* now. In *Cicero*'s time the firſt *Latin* could not be underſtood without ſtudying it; nor could *baſe Latin* be acquir'd without the ſame Pains; but this does not evince that the laſt in Effect can be ſaid to be true *Latin:* What Reſemblance is there between the *Latin* of *Romulus*'s Time, and that of the latter Ages? Perhaps there is no more than between *Hebrew* and *Greek*.

Theſe Reflections may ſerve to make us comprehend that there is much more Prepoſſeſſion and Fancy, than Reaſon and Truth, in what is ſaid of *Tongues*. And conſequently we may, without Willfulneſs or Obſtinacy, refuſe our Aſſent to all that the Grammarians and Criticks do ſay on this Head, which will be farther juſtify'd in the Sequel of what I am to ſay. Hitherto I have treated of the Nature, Origin, Progreſs and Change of *Tongues* in General, and ſhall now ſay ſomething of their Merit in Particular.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Greek, Latin, *and* French Tongues.

THE Learned entertain ſuch Advantageous Opinions of the *Greek*, that they make no difficulty of giving it the firſt place amongſt all other *Tongues*. If their Sentiments be agreeable to Truth, and if this *Tongue* has all the Merit which they pretend, 'tis becauſe the *Grecians* had a great ſhare of Wit and Judgment, and employ'd their Talents in the advancement of Arts and Sciences, to ſuch a degree, that *Athens* for a conſiderable time was eſteem'd the chief Nurſery of the Muſes, and her Citizens the moſt *Learned* of the whole Univerſe. Its People were no other than an Aſſembly of Philoſophers: They were not contented with what they acquir'd by Study, Meditation, and daily Conferences; they ranſack'd the Earth and the Seas, travell'd to the moſt diſtant Realms, as the *Indies*, *Egypt*, and *Chaldea*, to inform themſelves of every thing that in theſe Places cou'd be Learn'd. And in a Word, they did, for the Acquiſition of Arts and Sciences, all, that the moſt Ardent, Zealous, and reſtleſs Curioſity could inſpire men with.

All this Indefatigable Application and Extraordinary Study, could not fail of infinitely poliſhing and perfecting their *Tongue*. The difference of their Sects, neceſſarily multiplying Thoughts and Ideas, reduc'd them to a neceſſity of multiplying their Terms and manner

ner of Speaking. Thus all things that could poſſibly conſpire to the perfection of a *Tongue*, concurr'd to the advancement of that of the *Grecians*. It is then no wonder, if it has been carry'd to ſuch an extraordinary pitch of Excellence, as to become the Admiration of all the Learned.

The *Greek Tongue* has yet a farther Advantage over any other that is known to us; And that is, that the *Grecians*, who (at leaſt in reſpect to us) were the firſt Inventors of moſt part of the Arts and Sciences, were alſo the Inventors of moſt part of the Terms and Phraſes neceſſarily made uſe of in them. For, notwithſtanding the *Grecians* had taken them from the *Egyptians*, the *Chaldeans* and other Nations; yet it was they that furniſh'd the *Romans* with them, and it was the *Romans* who furniſh'd us; ſo that the *Romans* look'd upon themſelves as Diſciples to the *Grecians* in all Arts and Sciences, and borrow'd from them the greateſt Number of the Expreſſions, Phraſes, and Terms which they frequently employ'd, in treating upon thoſe Subjects, and which could not fail of exalting the *Grecians* to a great degree of ſuperiority above the *Romans*, in their Learning, and in their *Tongue*.

It may yet be added to the Advantage of the *Greek Tongue*, that it was far more Extenſive than the *Latin*; even *Cicero* himſelf acknowledges this in his Orations for the Poet *Archias*, when, to make the Compoſitions of this Man more valuable, he ſays, that his Verſes carry'd the Glory of the *Roman* Name further than ever it went before, *quod Græca leguntur in Omnibus ferè Gentibus, Latina ſuis finibus exiguis ſane continentur.*

tinentur. Perhaps he ſpoke in this wiſe, to ſerve the Cauſe he was pleading, and from the great regard he had for the *Grecians*, whom he always accounted ſuperior to the *Romans.*

The *Romans*, apply'd themſelves to the ſtudy of the Liberal Arts and Sciences but very late. This is ſufficiently plain from what *Cicero* ſays in the Oration, whereof I have now ſpoken; *Italia tum plena Græcarum Artium ac Diſciplinarum*, which plainly implies, that they were hardly known there in preceding Ages. What a certain Author, call'd *Amaſanius*, and one *Rabinius* had wrote before on thoſe Heads, was ſo barren and ill digeſted, that their performances were never thought worth the Reading, as the ſame *Cicero* obſerves in the firſt Book of his *Academick Queſtions.*

This haughty and warlike People did not begin to apply themſelves to the ſtudy of the Sciences, until they had glutted their Ambition by the Force and Exerciſe of their Arms. Before the times of *Cicero*, the *Romans* ſo very much neglected the Sciences, that, when this great Man ſought to Comfort himſelf in the ſtudy of Philoſophy, and thereby to arm his Soul with Courage to ſupport his Diſgrace, or to redreſs the unhappy Condition of the ſinking State; he was (as he tells us in the above cited Book, and elſewhere) either neceſſitated to Compoſe a great Number of New Terms, or elſe to borrow them from the *Greek*, and content himſelf with cloathing them in the *Roman* Dreſs, that is to ſay, with only giving them the *Roman* Termination.

He

He tells us alſo in the ſame Book, that he will endeavour, as much as ever he can, to ſpeak *Latin*, *enitar ut Latinè Loquar*, (for it is he who ſpeaks under the borrow'd Name of *Varro*;) and he remarks of *Brutus*, that he ſpoke *Latin* ſo perfectly well, whenever he treated on any Topick of Philoſophy, that he needed no aſſiſtance from the *Greek*. And thus it was that *Cicero* exerted his utmoſt Abilities, in order to render his *Tongue* as perfect as the *Greek*, and alſo to render the Sciences as eaſy and familiar to the *Romans*, as they were to the *Grecians*. In truth, it was a Work every way worthy of a Man of his Spirit, Learning and Reputation, to remove from his Country that ſhadow of Inferiority which then Eclips'd it in Compariſon of *Greece*, as to eloquence, Arts and Sciences; and to bring matters to that paſs, that if they excell'd the *Grecians* in the Arts of War and warlike Exploits, they at leaſt ſhould equal them in the Improvement of Sciences.

This was *Cicero*'s chiefeſt Aim in all the Treaties of Philoſophy and Rhetorick which he wrote, wherein may be ſeen, how much he endeavour'd to give *Latin* Names to all the Tropes and Figures: Nevertheleſs it is certain that the *Romans* never Cultivated the Sciences with ſuch Aſſiduity and Application as the *Grecians* did, becauſe they bent their Genius another way; which made *Quintilian* ſay, that the *Grecians* were more Learned, but, at the ſame time, that the *Romans* very far excell'd them in all Moral and Heroick Virtues, as *Cicero* alſo ſaid before him.

But

But neither *Cicero* nor *Varro*, who wrote of his own times, have done as much as they might have done, to enrich their *Tongues*, and make it keep pace with the *Greek*; whether it was that they were too reſerv'd or cautious, or too negligent in this Caſe, and choſe rather to make uſe of the *Greek* Terms, which they found ready to their hands, than to be at the trouble of coining ſuch New ones, as they had occaſion for, as was cuſtomary with almoſt all ſuch as wrote in thoſe Days. And from hence it comes to paſs, that *Tongues*, wherein Sciences were firſt cultivated, will always preſerve ſome advantages over the reſt, if it were but for this only reaſon, that the Sciences had their birth in them. And this is what *Quintilian* means, when he expreſſes himſelf in theſe Terms. * *Fingere Græcis Magis Conceſſum eſt, qui ſonis etiam quibuſdam & affectibus non dubitarunt Nomina aptare, non aliâ libertate, quam quâ illi primi homines rebus appellationes dederunt.*

No body, ſince *Cicero*'s time, has endeavour'd to finiſh what he left imperfect. The *Romans* who have treated of the Sciences, have either wrote in *Greek*, or only made uſe of Latinis'd *Greek* Terms: So that the *Latin Tongue* never reach'd to the Copiouſneſs of the *Greek*, but always left it the glory of being the *Tongue* of the Sciences, altho' it were poſſible to do as much in *Latin*, as ever was done in *Greek*. *Quintilian* could not avoid ſaying and acknowledging, that the *Romans* had not a ſufficient Opinion of themſelves; and that it was owing

* *Lib.* 2. *C.* 14.

to their fearfulneſs or jealouſy, rather than their want of reaſon or ability, that they did not make their *Tongue* as rich and Harmonious as the *Greek*. * *Iniqui Judices adverſum nos ſumus, Ideoque paupertate Sermones Laboramus.* I ſay, this great Rhetorician could not forbear expreſſing himſelf in this manner, tho' in all other points he ſhews a greater eſteem for the *Greek* than the *Roman Tongue*, out of a prejudice of Opinion, ſo common to all Mankind, that, *whatſoever we learn by cuſtom is never ſo excellent or valuable, as that which is the fruit of a tedious and painful Study.*

The ſame thing may be ſaid of the *French*, in regard to the *Greek* and *Latin*, as has been ſaid of the *Latin* in regard to the *Greek*. We have all along accounted the *Grecians* and *Romans* our Teachers, and have not preſum'd to behave our ſelves otherwiſe than their Scholars. We are ſo afraid to rid our ſelves of the Yoaks, which were impos'd at Schools and Colleges, that we have not Courage enough to attempt to do for our own *Tongue*, even as much as the *Latins* did for theirs. We dare not make uſe of it in all ſorts of Writings and Exerciſes, nor enrich it with all the Terms and Expreſſions we ſtand in need of, in order to treat of all ſort of Subjects with Strength and Eloquence. And yet the default lies not in the *Tongue*, but our ſelves, becauſe upon the ſuppoſition of an equal Improvement, in every *Tongue* there is a certain equality.

If

* *Lib.* 8. *c.* 3.

If Sounds conſidered in themſelves are abſolutely indifferent to ſignify all ſorts of Things, and Thoughts, all ſorts of Beings and forms of Beings; it is certain that there is neither Thing, nor Thought, nor Being, nor form of Being, which may not be joyn'd to any Sound, and expreſs'd in any *Tongue* whatever. If there be any *Tongue* that can claim a ſuperiority, it muſt certainly be the *Hebrews*. A *Tongue*, that came immediately from God, muſt undoubtedly have divers perfections which no other can attain. But I offend not I hope the Majeſty of that Sovereign Being, which inſpir'd the firſt Man with this *Tongue*, when I ſay that he might have done in any, or all the other *Tongues*, as much as he did in the *Hebrew*; that he might have inſtructed Man in his Almighty Will; that he might have reveal'd all the Myſteries of Heaven, and given all his awful Commands, in any other *Tongue*, and even in the ſame manner, that he did it in the *Hebrew*: Becauſe all that can be done in one *Tongue*, may certainly be done in another.

I might venture to ſay farther, if it be true that God reveal'd to *Moſes*, and the other Prophets, thoſe Myſteries, which he was willing all Mankind ſhould know in every Country and *Tongue*, (ſince it was his determin'd Will, that the knowledge of his Name ſhould be carry'd through all the Earth,) there is then a neceſſity to believe that whatever is contain'd in the *Hebrew*, may be expreſs'd in every other *Tongue*, and that every Man is able to ſpeak, and write the Senſe of it in all ſorts of Characters: Otherwiſe it may be ſaid, that God had affix'd his Tremendous Truths, and conſequently

ſequently the Salvation of Man, to ſome certain Sounds and Characters; which in effect would be a Madneſs and Frenzy only becoming the *Cabal*. We muſt however always except the *Hebrew*, not becauſe of its Nature as a *Tongue*, but becauſe of the uſe God was pleas'd to make of it in inſtructing his Servants, the Prophets.

It is ſure and manifeſt then, that no one *Tongue* can have a real and abſolute Advantage above any other; that all *Tongues* may be carry'd to as high a degree of perfection as another; and conſequently, that all the Elaborate Diſcourſes, by which the Value of the *Greek* and *Latin* are enforc'd, to the prejudice of living *Tongues*, are only Demonſtrations of the Infatuations and fond Conceits, wherewith our Maſters and Tutors have inſpir'd us.

Theſe general Maxims, whereby I have endeavour'd to reduce all *Tongues* to an Equality, may not as yet perhaps be ſufficient to diſſipate the Prepoſſeſſions of the fond Admirers of dead *Tongues*; and for this reaſon I think it proper to come now to an Examination of all the Qualities, which give value to any Language. This is what I propoſe in the remainder of this Little Treatiſe; and herein I ſhall ſhew that whatever it is, that makes Dead *Tongues* eſtimable, either is, or may be, found among all other *Tongues*. The *French* I intend to make my Example, and what I ſhall ſay thereupon, may withall imaginable eaſe be apply'd to any other.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of Perſpicuity.

IT is a Maxim that can never be conteſted by thoſe, that have in the leaſt examin'd what Speech is, and for what end it was given, that clearneſs or perſpicuity makes the firſt, and perhaps the only real Merit of Diſcourſe. This is a truth which the Grammarians and Rhetoricians never ceaſe to repeat, *Perſpicuitas Orationis ſumma Virtus.* The Truth is, if Man only ſpoke to make himſelf underſtood, that is to ſay, to repreſent to other Men's underſtanding the ſame Ideas, that he conceives in his own; our firſt view, and greateſt addreſs wou'd be, to expreſs our ſelves in ſo clear a manner, as might convey our Conceptions to others, without any manner of Obſcurity or Equivocation. Even *Ariſtotle* himſelf, tho' a very obſcure Author in what he has wrote, has nevertheleſs accountd clearneſs of Expreſſion, as the principal part of an Orator.

For if our Diſcourſe is not capable of making our Thoughts underſtood, what is there that can do it? *Quintilian* tells us, That a Diſcourſe, muſt be very faulty, when it requires a Interpretation. * *Oratio vero cujus ſumma Laus perſpecuitas, quam ſit vitioſa, ſi egeat Interpre!* But who is able to be the Interpreter of an

* *Quin. Lib.* 1. *c.* 6.

ambiguous and obſcure Diſcourſe? He that undertakes to do this, may be miſtaken in his Expoſition; and, in matters of ambiguity, others are not bound to believe, that the Interpreter has explain'd himſelf clearlier, than his Author.

St. *Auguſtin*, who may be accounted amongſt the firſt Rank of *Rhetoricians*, holds perſpicuity in ſuch great eſteem, that he makes no ſcruple to prefer it even to *purity* of Diction, when they cannot both be had together. He was of Opinion, that, in ſpeaking to the People of *Africk*, whoſe Ears were not made to diſtinguiſh the Pronunciation of the Word *Os*, ſignifying a Mouth, and the ſame Word *Os*, ſignifying a Bone, we ſhould uſe the old Word *Oſſum*, to remove all Equivocations; becauſe (ſays he) the purity of Diſcourſe ſignifies nothing, when it hinders the Perſon that hears us from comprehending with eaſe. His Words deſerve a recital: *Oſſum potius quam os dicere, ne iſta Syllaba, non ab eo quod ſunt oſſa, ſed ab eo, quod ſunt ora, intelligatur, ubi Afræ aures de Corruptione vocalium, vel productione non judicant. Quid enim prodeſt locutionis integritas, quam non ſequitur Intellectus audientis; cum Loquendi Omnino nulla ſit Cauſa, ſi quod Loquimur non Intelligunt, propter quos, ut Intelligunt, Loquimur.* And hereupon he praiſes the Interpreters of the Scripture, for having neglected this purity, to give a more perfect Notion of the Senſe of it.

Upon theſe Principles, which cannot be conteſted without declaring againſt Reaſon, the clearer a Man ſpeaks, the better he ſpeaks; and conſequently the fitter any *Tongue* is for Perſpicuity of Diſcourſe, the more perfect it is; and the

the more diſtant from doubtful and equivocative Senſes, the more it merits our eſteem. But to do Juſtice to all, they are all in themſelves equally ſuſceptible of this Perſpicuity; and obſcurity of Stile is not ſo much a defect in the *Tongue*, as it is in the Writer; for in every *Tongue*, thoſe that are ſufficiently Eloquent, can both ſpeak and write with clearneſs enough.

I except not the *Hebrew*, how obſcure ſoever it be in the only Book, which we have remaining in that *Tongue*; becauſe that obſcurity comes from a particular Order of the Providence of God, and not from the Nature of the *Tongue*. *Hebrew* was as clear to thoſe that ſpoke it then, as the *French* is to us. For if it had been obſcure in common uſage, How could the *Hebrews* have form'd any Society, or kept up a Commerce together? It would have been a very pleaſant thing indeed for one *Hebrew* to have been oblig'd to ſtudy the *Language* of another, in order to capacitate himſelf to comprehend the other's meaning. What Converſation, What Commerce is there amongſt Men, that only ſpeak to one another in Enigmas, and in doubtful and equivocal Terms?

If we except the Books of the Scripture, and the Authors that wrote them, and who were directed by a particular Inſpiration from Heaven, to write them in the manner they did, there is no one, we may ſay humanely ſpeaking, that write, and follow the lights of Nature and Reaſon in ſo doing, but who expreſs themſelves with all imaginable Perſpicuity. As naturally no body ſpeaks, but to make himſelf underſtood to thoſe that are preſent; ſo naturally no body writes, but to make himſelf underſtood to thoſe

that are remote by diſtance of Place, or that may be ſo, by diſtance of Time: It would be the greateſt folly to ſpeak or write in ſuch a manner, as not to be underſtood; and a Man, in ſuch a Caſe, wou'd deſerve neither to be heard or read. Tho' therefore we may be oblig'd to ſtudy the *Language*, wherein the Prophets ſpoke to us from the Mouth of God; yet other Writers muſt not expect the ſame Privilege; becauſe there is no Man ſo exalted in Underſtanding and Learning above another, as to propoſe himſelf to him for an Oracle.

Nothing can be ſaid more to the diſadvantage of *Ariſtotle*'s Reputation, than that he wrote on purpoſe not to be underſtood, as he is made to tell his Diſciple *Alexander*: He might better have ſpar'd himſelf the trouble of writing, than to have wrote ſo, as to be a Torture to Men's Underſtanding. But we muſt have more favourable Notions of this Great *Philoſopher*, who ought to be conſider'd as the Inventor of the Method, and conſequently of Perſpicuity. We muſt therefore attribute the difficulty of underſtanding him, to the things whereof he wrote, and not to the manner, wherein he wrote them; and what he ſays to his Diſciple amounts to no more than this, that it would be hard to underſtand his Books, unleſs he were perſonally inſtructed by ſome eminent and well vers'd Proficient in his Philoſophy; which is no more than what may be ſaid of all the Books that have been wrote by the Chiefs of Sects, into whoſe Myſteries we muſt be initiated, before we can can comprehend them: So that the difficulty ariſes from the ſubject, and not from the ſtile.

If there have been *Philoſophers* who have wrote obſcurely on ſet purpoſe, (as *Plato*, who, in his Letter to *Dioniſius* the Tyrant, obſerves that he would write to him about God, no otherwiſe than Enigmatically, leaſt thoſe, who might ſee his Letter, ſhould diſcover his true Sentiments.) Theſe *Philoſophers* did only imitate the *Prophet* whom God himſelf directed to write in this way. * *Clement Alexandrinus* fully ſhews, that the Enigmatical ſtile of the *Poets* and *Philoſophers* is taken from the *Hebrews*. But in this they are not excuſeable, ſince, as I have ſaid before, nothing ſhou'd be wrote, but what may be diſcover'd and laid open to the whole World, For † *Intemperantis eſt Scribere quod occultari velit*, ſays *Cicero*.

The Author above cited has been blam'd for not explaining himſelf clearly in his *Stromata*; and the only excuſe he makes is, that he fear'd *Philoſophers*, puff'd up with the Pride, and ſelf Conceit, and full of Carnal Principles, wou'd abuſe Truth if it were nakedly ſet forth; but as for thoſe who had received the Chriſtian Faith, he ſaid, it would be eaſy enough for them to diſcover Truth hid under the Veils, wherewith he had cover'd it. But whatever may be ſaid in Juſtification of this Conduct, it cannot be right; ſince 'tis expoſing thoſe, whom we pretend to inſtruct, to the danger of receiving Errors for Truth, and expoſing our ſelves likewiſe to the ſuſpicion of abetting Error;

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* *Strom.* 2. & 5.
† *Accad. qu*, 1.

Error; a thing, which in writing every Author ought more eſpecially to avoid.

The Fathers indeed, in thoſe Times, when Chriſtians and Pagans liv'd promiſcuouſly together, did not ſpeak altogether ſo clearly of ſome of the Myſteries of our Holy Religion, when they ſpoke in Publick, and in Aſſemblies where any *Pagans* or *Catechumens* happen to be. But the Faithful very well knew what they meant, becauſe they perfectly underſtood the ſignification of the figurative Expreſſions, which thoſe Fathers made uſe of: So that the Reſervedneſs, affected by the Fathers on ſuch Occaſions, does not properly fall under this vicious obſcurity of Stile.

I may farther add, that we frequently call Authors very obſcure, when it happens that we do not perfectly underſtand the *Language* they write in; for one muſt neceſſarily have the aſſurance of a Modern Critick, to pretend to know *Greek*, as well as *Ariſtotle*. If then we neither know the things which were wrote by ſome Ancients, nor the *Tongues*, wherein they wrote them, 'tis injuſtice to reproach them with obſcurity; becauſe they could not prevent their Writings from becoming obſcure to us, for the reaſons which I have now obſerv'd, and for many more, that may be alledged.

I have ſaid all this to intimate, that neither Author or *Tongues* do merit Eſteem, but in proportion to their facility of being underſtood; tho' we muſt not always impute their obſcurity either to them, or to the *Tongues* wherein they write.

Now I ſhou'd be glad that any body cou'd give me a ſufficient reaſon, why we may not write

write and ſpeak as clearly in one Language as in another. If every Man did but know his Native *Tongue* perfectly well, he might ſpeak and write therein, with the ſame clearneſs and as much facility, as the moſt excellent *Greek* or *Latin* Authors did in theirs. If there is any *Tongue*, that in this reſpect has an advantage above the reſt, I ſhould not ſcruple to ſay that it is the *French*, at leaſt we may diſpute it with the *Latin*, in reſpect of the plainneſs of its Conſtitution, and the eaſy and natural ſcituation of all its Terms; as we ſhall ſee in the ſequel.

I cannot however finiſh this Chapter, without giving, in this place, an Advice, which to me ſeems of great Importance, for preſerving the Beauty of our *Tongue*. Hitherto we have apply'd our ſelves to the Simplicity and genuine Conſtruction of our *Tongue*, which are the foundations of Perſpicuity; but I apprehend that we ſhall grow weary of this ſimplicity, and fall into the vicious taſte of certain Writers, whereof *Quintilian* makes mention, and who were perſuaded that an Expreſſion was ſaid or ſpoke with wonderful Wit and Elegance, when it required an Interpreter to render it Intelligible. * *Perſvaſit multos jam iſta perſuaſio, ut id jam demum eleganter & exquiſitè dictum putent, quod interpretandum ſit*, meaſuring the fineneſs and ſubtilty of their Wit, by that which another muſt neceſſarily have to comprehend them. † *Ingenioſi, ſi ad intelligendos nos opus ſit Ingenio.*

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* *Lib.* 8. *C.* 2.
† *Ibid. C.* 1.

The Emperor *Auguſtus* accounted them fooliſh, who ſpoke, rather to render themſelves admir'd, than underſtood. * *Quos mirentur potius homines quam Intelligant.* Since then it may with juſtice be ſaid, that Perſpicuity is one of the prime Characters of our *Tongue*, let us endeavour to preſerve it.

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* *Sueton. in Aug.*

CHAP. XI.

Of Purity.

ONE of the qualities of Diſcourſe, which contributed ſtill more to make it clear and intelligible, and to form in the Mind of the Hearer Ideas perfectly alike to thoſe, which are form'd in the Mind of the Speaker, is the *Purity* of its Terms. But we muſt firſt know wherein this *Purity* conſiſts, what it is, and why it has received that Name.

According to the Maſters of Art, this *Purity* conſiſts, firſt, in ſuch Elegance, or choice of Terms and Phraſes, as are moſt capable to make others conceive the things we ſpeak of, with the ſame diſtinction, the ſame clearneſs and exactneſs, wherein we our ſelves at firſt conceived them. And Secondly in the *Syntax*, or conſtruction of Words, which ſhou'd always

ways agree with thoſe that go before or follow, according to the Rules of Grammar.

This, I think, is what produces the whole *Purity* of *Language*; and I believe it is call'd by this Name, becauſe ſuch a *Language* repreſents to the Mind the moſt pure Ideas of things; that is to ſay, it ſhews them without Mixture, Equivocation, or Ambiguity, perfectly diſtinct and ſeparated from all other things; and in a Word, ſuch as they really are in themſelves, or ſuch as the Author conceived or imagined them to be.

For the better underſtanding of this we muſt farther know, what it is that conſtitutes *Elegance* of Speech. The Terms and Methods of Speaking are diſtinguiſh'd into *proper* and *figurative*: The *proper* are thoſe which are taken in the Signification, to which they were at firſt affix'd; the *figurative* thoſe, which in their firſt Inſtitution do ſignify Things different to what they are apply'd to. Thus *Quintilian* ſpeaks on this Subject, *Propria ſunt verba, cum id ſignificant in quod primum denominata ſunt, tranſlata, cum aliam Naturæ Intelligentiam, aliam loco præbent.* The ſame Notion agrees with the Matter we are now upon. Terms are call'd *proper*, when they are made to ſignify the ſame Things which they ſignify'd in their Original, and *figurative*, when they are taken in another Senſe. Now the proper and figurative do equally ſerve to the Elegance of Diſcourſe; the proper make us conceive the Natural Ideas of Things; and the figurative ſerve to render theſe Ideas more lively and bright, and to give more Lofty and Noble Sentiments of the things whereof we ſpeak; becauſe theſe figurative Terms are commonly taken from things

which

which are beſt known and moſt eſteem'd, in order to give a clearer Sight and higher Eſtimation of what we are then diſcourſing.

Figurative Terms were firſt invented out of Neceſſity, and becauſe proper ones were wanting; but afterwards Men came to make uſe of them not only thro' Neceſſity, but for Pleaſure likewiſe, and that a certain Variety might make the Diſcourſe more agreeable. † *Tranſlata verba neceſſitas genuit, poſt autem delectatio celebravit.* And 'tis then that we ſpeak both *Elegantly* and *Purely*, when we know how to make a fit uſe of both, when we know how to mix them together ſo, as to make them fit to produce the Effects which we propoſe to ourſelves, which is both to inſtruct and perſwade.

Now there is no *Tongue*, wherein theſe kinds of Terms and Expreſſions are not already, or may not be found; and conſequently there is none, wherein we may not ſpeak both *Elegantly* and *Purely*. If the *Tongue* is not as yet become either ſufficiently *rich*, or ſufficiently copious to furniſh Phraſes both proper and figurative; this Deficiency may happily be remedied by the Care and Induſtry of Learned Men.

Some Authors will have it, that an *Elegance* of Diction comes from its Elevation above the popular *Language*: But be that true, yet there is no *Tongue*, wherein we may not form a Stile, quite different from that of the Vulgar, and becoming the Dignity of the Things we treat of.

For in ſhort, if the *Greek* and *Latin* have proper Locutions to ſignify ſuch a thing, or paint ſuch an Image, why ſhould we not imagine that the *French*, for inſtance, has the like? To name

name things properly, and to expreſs the Thoughts and Movements of the Soul, we need only conceive them aright, and form clear and diſtinct Ideas of them; and then we cannot fail of cloathing them with juſt and natural, and even great and noble Expreſſions. *Socrates* was wont to ſay that we always ſpeak well upon whatſoever Subject we thoroughly know. *Omnes in eo quod Sciunt, ſatis eſſe Eloquentes:* So that, when Men go about to diſpute the Advantages of a *Tongue*, and its Abilities to ſerve them on all Subjects and all Occaſions, the firſt thing they ſhould do, is to diſpute the faculty of juſt thinking: For if they could think as well as the *Greeks* and *Romans* did, it would be impoſſible but that they would write and talk as well too. Suppoſing it true then that the *French* is not yet in this Perfection, there is nothing in itſelf that hinders it; for if it is not yet ſufficiently furniſh'd with Words and Forms of ſpeaking, we may but do, as the *Greeks* and *Romans* did, and we need not fear the Malice of Criticks, that take an Offence at every new Word.

Purity may then be found in every *Tongue*, ſince every Man may think as juſtly as another. Neither can any one *Tongue* pretend to outvie another in this particular, at leaſt in the Judgment of thoſe, that make uſe of their Reaſon, and will not ſuffer themſelves to be dazzled by the great Phraſes that are uſually employ'd to extol the *Elegance* of *Greek* or *Latin*, in Contempt of other *Languages*.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of Neatneſs.

Neatneſs is a further Perfection in Language, that is principally intended to make it clear and intelligible. Now this *Neatneſs* ariſes from the juſtneſs of its Compoſition; that is to ſay, from the Order and right Diſpoſition of Words in Phraſes, and the due Regulation of thoſe Phraſes in Periods; becauſe when each Phraſe and Word is plac'd in its right Order, and where it ought to be, to perform its proper Office, the Diſcourſe cannot fail of being *clear* and *intelligible*; ſince in this Situation, every part contributes, as much as poſſible, to make it underſtood. Whereas when the Compoſition is embaraſs'd, and the Phraſes and Words out of their natural ſituation, the Diſcourſe muſt neceſſarily be obſcure, ambiguous, and equivocal; becauſe we ſhall be at a Loſs to find out the Concord of all its Parts; not to ſay that a Diſcourſe of this kind often carries a quite contrary Senſe than what the Author intended.

Words and Phraſes, whereof a Diſcourſe is compos'd, may not unfitly be compar'd to Stones, that are to raiſe ſome Order of Architecture, or to Pieces of Timber, that are to be faſhion'd into ſome curious Work; for if each Stone and Plank be not jointed to what it correſponds with, it anſwers not the Deſign of the Carpenter or Architect, but produces a quite contrary Effect.

The regularity of Conſtruction, or what we call *Syntax*, is another Cauſe of *Neatneſs* and Elegance. For when the Relation between the *Nominative* Caſe and the *Verb*, and between the *Subſtantive* and the *Adjective* is not perceiveable, it is impoſſible to apprehend the meaning of the Sentence; ſo that a fault in *Syntax* is equally a Tranſgreſſion both againſt *Neatneſs* and *Purity*.

Now this is the Reaſon that the perfection, which ariſes from the natural Order of the parts of Speech, and from the Regularity of their Compoſition, is call'd *Neatneſs*: The word comes from the Latin, *Nitere*, which ſignifies to ſhine or reflect a great Light; and this Term we make uſe of to denote the Impreſſion, which bright and poliſh'd Bodies make upon our Eyes, when, by the ſmoothneſs of their Surface, they reflect a great deal of the Light, that falls upon them: And in like manner, a Diſcourſe, where all the Words are placed in their Natural Situation, and regular Conſtruction, and where every part is rang'd in its proper Order, without any Error or Confuſion, cannot but reflect all its Light; *i. e.* cannot but carry into the Hearer's Mind all the Senſe that the Speaker wou'd impart; and ſo the word *Neatneſs* is no improper Term to expreſs this Perfection by.

Now there is no Language that is not capable of this perfection, ſince nothing can hinder its right poſition of Words and Phraſes, and its exact obſervance of the Rules of *Syntax*. If ſome excel others in this Regard, they muſt be ſuch, as place their Words in their natural order; *i. e.* make them follow, in Diſcourſe, the ſame order, that their Ideas have in the Mind; but

this is what every *Tongue* requires. For if *Tongues* were given unto Men, for no other purpoſe than to denote their Thoughts by outward Expreſſions, then ought they all to follow the natural order of their Thoughts, and every Word ſhou'd preſent it ſelf in the ſame rank, wherein the Idea, it ſignifies, does: If ſome by Art have deviſed any other order than this, they have ſo far corrupted Nature, and injur'd the *Language* they pretended to amend.

This however is what all the *Rhetoritians*, and chiefly the *Poets*, have done in the *Latin Tongue*; they have revers'd and confounded the order of Words, to find out Cadences more agreeable to the Ear: But this Artifice is ill contriv'd and badly founded. For ſince Cadence or Number is no way comparable to its *Neatneſs*, nothing ſhou'd be done for the former, in prejudice to the latter; nor is it any commendation to the *Latin Tongue*, that Men have introduc'd a number ſo contrary to Nature; ſince this plainly ſhews that it naturally wanted *Number* before.

Quintilian ſomewhere or other tells us, that nothing hurts the Perſpicuity of Language more than the Intricacy and Confuſion of its Words; and, after having ſpoke of ſeveral things that make a Diſcourſe obſcure, this blending of Words, he ſays, is the worſt of all, *quibus adhuc pejor eſt Miſtura verborum.* I am ſurpriz'd how he cou'd mention this fault, without perceiving, that therein he blam'd all the *Roman* Authors, who were univerſally addicted to it; or how he cou'd inſtance in this Verſe of *Virgil.*

Saxa

Saxa vocant Itali, mediis quæ in fluctibus, aras, &c.

For an Example of confus'd conſtruction, when the very beſt of their Proſe-Authors are full of the ſame perplexity. There is not a Page in *Cicero*, wherein Inſtances of this kind may not be found, and even in thoſe Pieces, which require more than ordinary *Neatneſs* and Simplicity: As for Verſe, 'tis not ſo much to be wonder'd at, by reaſon of its conſtraint in point of Meaſure. There is ſuch a great confuſion of Words almoſt in every Line of *Horace*, that it is impoſſible to perceive his Senſe without tranſpoſing each of his Words into their Natural place. Mr. *Labourerour* has abundantly ſhewn the great Advantages of a direct and Natural Conſtruction in the *French Tongue*, how much it excels the Intricate and Confus'd conſtruction of the *Latin*, without a Neceſſity for my ſaying any more.

It is not however the *Latin Tongue*, as I ſaid before, that we ought to blame on this account; 'tis rather the Authors, who have introduc'd this Artifice; for I cannot believe that the *Romans* ſpoke in this manner. Men naturally ſpeak as they think. It is manifeſt then, that this Conſtruction is the Work of Art, and Art is always ill contriv'd, when it prejudices Nature, ſince its whole aim ſhou'd be to imitate Nature; for to ſpeak well, and write well, is to ſpeak as we think, and write as we ſpeak. Now if this *Tongue* was not harmonious enough in a Simple and Natural Conſtruction, it had been much better to have left it in its Natural Simplicity, than to have

ſought out ſuch an exquiſite harmony, at the expence of its clearneſs; ſince every thing that deſtroys Perſpicuity can never be any other than a fault.

But what is very wonderful, is, how ſo many *Rhetoricians* and *Grammarians* come to admire this Conſtruction. I have ſeen it applauded in a Modern, becauſe it kept the Mind attentive and in breath, unto the end of a Period, in order to conceive all that the Orator had to ſay. But there appears to be no Solidity in this reaſon: For in whatſoever manner this Conſtruction is made, whether it be agreeable or contrary to Natural order, yet ſtill, the Hearer or Reader waits the end of the Period, before they form their Thought, *Etenim expectant aures, ut verbis Colligatur Sententia*; and for this Reaſon Periods of too great a length are as fatigueing in our *Tongue* as in the *Latin*, notwithſtanding, that our *Tongue* ranges its Words in their natural Order. In ſhort, if the Senſe be not compleat, until we come to the end of the Period, there is a neceſſity of going to the end, as well in one *Tongue* as another, before we can form a true Judgment. For Example, when I read the beginning of the Epiſtle Dedicatory of Mr. *de Vaugelas* —— "*This ſmall Treatiſe* "*has ſo ſlender a proportion with the Great-*"*neſs of your Merit and exalted Dignity, that* "*I cou'd never have had ſo much as a Thought* "*of addreſſing it to you, had you not done* "*me the honour of letting me underſtand, that* "*it would not be diſagreeable to you.* And in like manner when I read the beginning of the firſt Book of *Cicero Definibus*, my mind cannot

not be at reſt, nor can I form any judgment till the Sentence be finiſh'd. *Non eram Neſciûs, Brute, cum quæ ſummis ingeniis, exquiſitaque doctrinâ Philoſophi Græco Sermone tractaviſſent, ea litteris Latinis mandaremus, fore ut hic noſter labor in varias reprehenſiones incurreret.* The Mind in both theſe Inſtances is equally attentive, until it comes to the end of the Periods, tho' the firſt follows the order of Conception, and the other does not.

Many other Remarks might be made on the Defects of the *Latin* Conſtruction, (for Inſtance, many Verſes occuring in their Proſe) but what has been ſaid will be an Apology for the *French* for making their Conſtruction ſo ſimple and natural, but none at all for the other, whoſe Conſtruction is ſo artfully contriv'd and ſtudy'd.

But 'tis enough for me that I have eſtabliſh'd this point, *viz.* that there is no one *Tongue*, wherein we cannot naturally diſpoſe, and regularly concord every Word, and wherein conſequently we cannot ſpeak with that *Neatneſs* which is always accompany'd with Perſpicuity, and with a certain eaſe, and ſimplicity, which can never fail of pleaſing. When a Man clearly ſees whatſoever he means to ſay, and has his Thoughts rightly regulated, his Diſcourſe will follow the order of his Thoughts, and his Words naturally take their proper places. Now *Neatneſs* of Thought and Conception, is not a Gift peculiar to Men either of one Country or *Tongue*, but is common to Men of all *Tongues*, and Countries, and conſequently, ſo is *Neatneſs* of Stile.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Copiouſneſs.

AS *Tongues* are given to Men, only for the Expreſſion of their Thoughts, ſo their abundance and *Copiouſneſs* proceeds from the multiplicity of things which Men know, and the variety of Thoughts that preſent themſelves on all Occaſions; ſo that Perſons of great Knowledge and Learning, who mediate much, and thoroughly conſider the nature of things, are almoſt always obliged, by the neceſſities they are under, to invent Words, in order to make themſelves underſtood, as I have ſaid before. And this *Copiouſneſs* contributes infinitely to *Perſpicuity*, ſince nothing can render a Diſcourſe more Eqivocal and Ambiguous, than when the ſame Words are liable to be taken in a different Senſe; as, on the contrary a *Tongue* would be perfectly clear, if each Thing and Idea had its proper Terms and Expreſſions.

Now it is evident, that as many Words may be invented in any one *Tongue*, as are in another: For there are none, whoſe Nature is averſe to this Invention, ſince nothing is requir'd for the Work, but Men of Senſe and Learning. For if one Man's Knowledge may be extended as far as another, there is no neceſſity that any *Tongue* ſhou'd continue in its Barrenneſs.

When

When the *Romans* apply'd themſelves to the ſtudy of *Philoſophy*, they immediately perceived that they wanted Terms. They took a great many from *Greek* Authors, and they made ſome themſelves, as the *Grecians* had done before them, for ſo *Cicero* ſays; *Dabitis enim, ut in rebus inuſitatis, quod Græci ipſi fecerunt, à quibus hæc tamdiu Tractantur, utamur verbis interdum non auditis:* Becauſe (as he adds) 'tis a common thing for all the Arts to have their proper Language; ſo that there is a neceſſity either to make or borrow new Words elſewhere for our uſe; * *Et id quidem commune omnium fere eſt artium, aut enim nova ſunt rerum novarum facienda nomina, aut ex alijs transferenda.* This is what ordinarily happens to all, who begin to write of Arts and Sciences in any *Language* whatſoever, not having as yet Terms and Phraſes proper for their uſe, *quæ enim res apud nos non erant, earum nomina non poterant eſſe Uſitata.*

But if there is a neceſſity for Men to make Phraſes and Locutions in a *Tongue*, in order to treat of things, which as yet have not been treated of; I know not how it comes about, that they are ſo very Nice in the compoſition of them, and why they make ſo great a Myſtery of it. It was once ſaid by a Grammarian, that an Emperor with all his Power, could not give a Freedom, in that Republick of Letters, to any one word This might really be call'd Childiſhneſs, becauſe it is not a matter of Power, but of right Reaſon. When a Word is fitly made, and

* *Accad. q. 1.*

anſwers the Occaſion that requires it, it ought to be favourably received, as a neceſſary ſign to make us well underſtood in ſuch Matters, as we have to treat of; and we are as much obliged to the Author of it, as we are to a Man, who has invented ſome new and neceſſary Mechanical Inſtrument. This Aſſertion then was only a mere vanity in the Grammarian, who was willing to give an Emperor to underſtand, that this Power did not extend it ſelf to the Mind, as it did to the Body; and he highly deſerv'd to have ſe't a little of that Prince's Reſentment, for the fooliſh boaſt of Liberty in thoſe People, that pretend to have the controul of the Empire of Letters.

Cicero underſtood this Matter better than the Grammarian, when he tells * *Varro, That he would, in his Opinion, merit very much of his fellow Citizens, if he did, not only enrich them with new Diſcoveries, but alſo with new Words, and that he himſelf wou'd not ſcruple to uſe them after him, as occaſion requir'd. Enimvero inquam, Varro, bene etiam meriturus mihi videris de tuis Civibus, ſi eos non modo copiâ rerum auxeris, ut efficiſti, ſed verborum; audebimus ergo novis verbis uti, te Authore, ſi neceſſe fuerit.* But who, without the higheſt aſtoniſhment, can read theſe Words of this great Orator, and ſee the ſcrupulous fear of our beſt Authors on this Head? Mr. *de Vaugelas* is of Opinion, that it is not allowable for us to make new Words, that if *Horace* gave this permiſſion, 'twas only to the *Romans*, and that we ought not to make free

* *Accad. q.* 1.

free with it, becauſe our *Tongue* is much more modeſt, and reſerv'd.

Upon what Rule of Grammar, of Wiſdom, or Politicks, thoſe that talk at this rate, propoſe to ſupport their reaſonings, I cannot tell: Do they believe that Grammar or Rhetorick forbids us to augment and enrich our *Tongue*; that it is Wiſdom in us to continue in an Impotence of expreſſing our ſelves perfectly, when we have it in our power to do it? or has the Magiſtracy made any Laws to deprive us of a freedom, we have by natural Right, ſince *Language* is given to aſſiſt our Underſtandings, as much as it can? Our *Tongue* has, in this reſpect, no other Genius than what all others have; the Principles of *Horace* are common to them all, and the Gravity and Reſervedneſs, for which thoſe Gentlemen commended it ſo highly, is only a Puſilanimous fear, they indulge themſelves in, to the Detriment of Arts and Sciences, as well as *Tongues*. For by what Methods can Sciences make any progreſs, if Learned Men are not allowed to form Terms and Faſhions of Speech proper to illuſtrate new Diſcoveries? Or by what means can *Tongues* be perfected, if we are ſtill to continue in this reſervedneſs? But this is only ſpoke with deference to better Judgements.

There is not then ſufficient Reaſon to contemn thoſe, who are ſo daring as to invent ſome Words, which their Occaſion requires, provided they do it with Judgment and Diſcretion, and according to the neceſſary Rules, which ought to be obſerv'd in that affair. The late Mr. *Menage* has been reproach'd for boaſting

that

that he was the Inventor of the Word *Proſator*: If indeed he made it to gain Applauſe, he well deſerv'd to be banter'd; for 'tis but a poor matter to glory in the Compoſition of a Word, and there is no Invention, tho' never ſo inconſiderable, but what deſerves more praiſe. But if he only ſaid it, to ſhew, that, in the *French Tongue*, they had not a Word to ſignify an *Author who writes in Proſe*, as the Word *Poeta* ſignifies a Man that writes in *Verſe*, and that the Word *Proſator* might be uſed in that Senſe; I ſee no reaſon why it ſhou'd not be receiv'd, or another, more ſignificant and more Analogous to the *Tongue*, be invented in its Room. In ſhort, nothing appears more contrary to reaſon, or ſhews the ridiculous jealouſy of Writers more, than to reject and diſpiſe a Word, without having any other to ſignify the ſame thing; for how could we have ever brought our *Tongue* to what it at this Day, if we had ſervilely adhered to he Rules that ſuch Men ſet us?

Either then we muſt of neceſſity forbear to improve and enrich our *Tongue*, or give a more favourable reception to new Words. But to whom (ſay you) will this right of making new Words belong? *Plato* was of Opinion that every conceited Man was not to make them according to his own Caprice, becauſe this would be a means to throw a *Tongue* into ſuch Confuſion, that Men wou'd not be able to underſtand one another, when every one was forging Words, and introducing them at pleaſure. * *Profecto ſi daretur cuique arbitrio & demere & addere,*

* *In Cratyl.*

addere, magna utique eſſet licentia, & quodlibet nomen cuique rei Unuſquiſque tribueret. 'Tis then unto the Learned that this Privilodge belongs; it is unto thoſe who write, and who perceive, in writing, that there are certain Terms wanting in their *Tongue*, which would be commodious for them, and for want of which, they are often oblig'd either to expreſs themſelves imperfectly, or to have recourſe to Circumlocutions, which very much lengthen the Diſcourſe, and make it tedious to the Reader.

Every one allows that all Artiſans have the Right of inventing their own Tools and Inſtruments, to carry on their reſpective Trades: And why ſhould we doubt but that the Learned have an equal right to make ſuch new Terms and Words, as they find wanting and neceſſary; ſince the Invention of moſt part of the Terms of Art, whether they be the Names of their Tools, or of their different ways of working, is owing to the Artificers themſelves? For inſtance, Who is it that found out the various Terms of Agriculture, all the divers Names that diſtinguiſh the qualities of the Earth, and the effects of the Influences of the Stars over Plants and Fruits? Were they not Country Clowns? and yet no body thought fit to diſpute their Prerogative in theſe Affairs; we uſe their Terms at this Day, and we do well to uſe them, becauſe they fully ſignify what they were intended to do; and the ſame we may ſay of all other Artiſans.

Why then ſhould not a Learned and Judicious Writer have the ſame Privilege? None is more capable of the buſineſs than he, ſince none underſtands the Subject he is upon, and what new Thoughts do ariſe from it, ſo well as he,

he, and conſequently, what new Phraſes and Dictions are neceſſary, were it only to diverſify his Diſcourſe, and prevent its being nautious, by a continual repetition of the ſame Sounds.

It is very certain, that there are Rules to be obſerv'd, as I have ſaid above. As firſt, that no Oſtentation ſhould appear in ſuch a Work; but on the contrary, that it ſhould be viſible it was pure neceſſity which conſtrain'd the Author to make ſuch a Term. Secondly ſuch a Term ſhou'd not be coin'd, as it were by hazard or Caprice, but ſhou'd be taken from other known Languages, ſuch as the *Greek* and *Latin*; or elſe from the Nature of the Thing, (as the name of a *Triangle* is given to any Three ſquar'd body, becauſe of its being of that make) or elſe from ſome other thing, that may have a reſemblance to what we are ſpeaking of, (as the Name of a *Sur-Dial* is given to that Inſtrument which ſhews, by the Sun, the Hour of the Day) otherwiſe this new invented Word will be unintelligible. Thirdly we ſhould conſult the humour of our own *Tongue*, in order to give it proper Pronunciation and Termination. Theſe Rules and whatever elſe the Maſters of this Art ſhall think fit to preſcribe, will prevent any ones excepting againſt the Invention of a Word, nor caviling at the Inventor, as ſome malicious Criticks did with our *French* Author, even as if he had been guilty of Treaſon. 'Tis nothing at all that a Word at firſt ſeems harſh and jarring, a little age and uſage will ſoften that. * *Quæ primo dura viſa ſunt uſu Moliuntur.*

But

* *Quint.* 15.

But here I muſt by the bye ſay, that we ſhou'd endeavour always to make our Words as proper to the *Tongue*, where into we adapt them, as we poſſibly can. That is to ſay, we ſhou'd make their Compoſition *French*, or at leaſt derive it from the *Latin*, or any other *Tongue*, that has an Affinity with the *French*; As the Word *Triangle* before-mention'd was made from *Tres* and *Augulus*, which are both *Latin* Words, and more proper to ſignify what it does, than the Word *Trigone* would be; becauſe it is more *French*. This we ſhou'd do, in all Arts and Sciences, that we may make their Precepts and Notions more eaſy and familiar, and not clog them, as is uſual, with obſcure and myſterious Terms, that are almoſt unintelligible; inſomuch, that Men are oblig'd to make a particular Study of the Terms themſelves, tho' the Arts and Sciences are ſufficiently difficult, without this additional Trouble. This Method of compoſing Words would infinitely tend to the beauty of a *Tongue*; it wou'd give it a more Original Air: Eſpecially if we always take, from what is the Foundation of our *Tongue*, ſuch Materials, as are neceſſary for the coining the Words we want, at leaſt, whenſoever we can find them there.

We are allow'd even to make uſe of a *Country* Word, when we cannot find one in Faſhion to ſignify our Thought: For perhaps the *Country* Word may be more ſignificant than any we can elſewhere find. Nor is there any reaſon to ſeek for another, when we find a Word ready made to our hands. This was *Cicero*'s Method, in treating of Rhetorick and Philoſophy: He ſpoke *Latin* as long as he cou'd, and never made

made uſe of *Latiniſed Greek* Words, but when he found he could not do without them.

But there is one thing to be obſerv'd by thoſe, that uſe a new Word the firſt time, or even a Word that has as yet not received a full Approbation by frequent uſe, that it ought to be done with Modeſty, and with a ſort of Submiſſion and Deference to thoſe who are more knowing in the *Tongue*, than they may be; conſtantly ſhewing that they are always ready to deſiſt from the uſe of ſuch a Word, if it be not approv'd by the beſt Judges, and that they are ready to receive any other, that may be eſtabliſh'd for the ſignification of the ſame thing.

But now, if we ſhou'd have a Reſpect and Deference for the Inventors of ſuch Words, as are neceſſary in a *Tongue*, we ſhou'd likewiſe have a ſtrict watch, to prevent the Introduction of unprofitable Words, and ſuch as ſignify the ſame things, for which we have a ſufficient number of very good ones already. This ſort of ridiculous Triflers ought to be ſlighted, as preverters of the lawful ſignification of Words, and breeders of endleſs Confuſion in *Tongues*.

But this is enough on this Subject; for my purpoſe is not, in this place, to give Rules for the Formation of Words, but only to ſhew, that there is no *Tongue*, that may not become every way as Copious as another, and I hope I have ſufficiently done that.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Of Force and Energy.

THOSE, that make their Boaſt of the *Energy* of *Tongues*, expreſs themſelves moſt commonly in certain myſterious Terms, enough to make one believe, they are minded to attribute to them a Force, anſwerable to what the *Jews* of the *Cabala* gave to the firſt *Tongue*; by the Power of which, they pretend, that the *Patriarchs*, *Moſes* and the *Prophets* wrought all their Miracles and Prodigies. *Pythagoras*, 'tis ſaid, cur'd the Diſeaſes of the Soul and Body by certain Forms of Speech; *Zoroaſtes* made Men both ſound and wiſe by the Efficacy of ſome particular Words; and, to hear the great Admirers of *Latin* and *Greek* talk, one wou'd be almoſt tempted to believe, that thoſe *Tongues* had, in ſome meaſure, a power to effect the ſame Things.

God can indeed by his word do whatever he pleaſeth, *dixit, & facta ſunt:* He can affix ſo great an Efficacy to certain Words, that, as ſoon as Men pronounce them, they ſhall not fail of their operation, (as we know it happen'd in ſome *Primitive* Exorciſms) and 'twas probably from this power of God's word, that the ancient *Philoſophers*, in particular *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, (who were not ignorant of ſuch Tradition) invented their Doctrine of the Force and Efficacy of Words and Signs. We however muſt not acknowledge that in any Words, (except

(except thoſe of the Sovereign Lord of all Things) there can be any other Efficacy, but that of uniting Men together, by a mutual Intelligence of their Wills and Thoughts; a Privilege, that I ſhall hereafter ſhew, is no way peculiar to one *Tongue*, more than another.

There are but two Things, ſays Mr. *le Laboureur*, of any great Conſideration and Concernment to the Perfection of a *Tongue*, firſt, a ſufficient Number of proper Terms; and then, a juſt Diſpoſition of them. In my Opinion he is much in the Right: But if *Number* and *Energy* be likewiſe thought requiſite, whence, I pray, does *Energy* ariſe, but from a propriety of Terms, or whence Number, but from their apt Order and Diſpoſition? And I have already prov'd that every *Tongue* is capable of theſe. But becauſe this will ſcarce be enough to ſatisfy the Partiſans of the *Greek* and *Latin*, let us enter into a fair Detail of the Matter; and, to ſhew, that this *Energy* is a perfection communicable to any *Tongue*, conſider a little farther, wherein it does conſiſt.

Now in Order to underſtand this matter right, we muſt explain more at large, in what manner the Thoughts and Conceptions of our Minds firſt paſs into Words, and thence into Writing; and to this purpoſe muſt in the firſt place lay it down for a ſtanding Rule, that the External Word is not properly the Word, but rather the *Voice of the true Word*, as has already been ſaid from St. *Auſtin*; and, for this Reaſon, Articulated Sounds he calls *the Voice of Words*. We muſt farther underſtand that *Writing* is the Expreſſion, or Painting, of the Articulated Voice, as the Voice is the Expreſſion of the Thought

Thought (for it may not be amiſs to give juſt Notions of Writing, even tho' we are treating of Speech, as I ſhall hereafter ſhew). Now if our Voice be a Deſcription of our Thought, our Thought muſt immediately paint it ſelf upon our Imagination, otherwiſe our Speech cannot deſcribe what our Thoughts are. Our Thoughts are therefore follow'd by certain Stroaks in the Imagination, theſe Stroaks are again follow'd by thoſe of Words, and thoſe of Words by thoſe of Writing, whenever we are minded to deſcribe our Thoughts.

In this Order all the different Images of our Minds are form'd, and form'd with ſuch Celerity, that we think them done in the very Inſtant, and ſometime believe that they were done at all; for it is certain, that, as the Thoughts of the Things we know, and whoſe Names we know, are always accompanied with certain Stroaks of the Imagination, which repreſent their Names; ſo we can hardly at firſt ſight perceive the Neceſſity of our Thoughts painting themſelves in the Imagination, in order to be deſcrib'd by Words; and ſome may be apt to think, that this whole Impreſſion upon the Brain or Imagination, is no more than a pure conceit. This however is inconteſtable, that theſe matters are thus tranſacted, and that it is impoſſible for us to ſpeak of any thing we have but barely thought on, without having our Thought accompany'd with ſome certain motion of the Spirits in our Brain. For this Reaſon it is, that we ſo frequently ſay, *That a Thought has eſcap'd us*, i. e. paſs'd too quickly thro' the Brain, to leave any Traces to make us remember it, tho' it did not paſs ſo quickly

either, but that it made ſome ſlight Impreſſion, otherwiſe we cou'd not ſo much as remember that it had eſcap'd us.

Even Things the moſt abſtracted and Spiritual we can think of, muſt be cloathed with certain Images, before they can be expreſſed by ſenſible Signs. Thus, when we think of God, of Angels, of Juſtice and Truth, there is a Neceſſity, that the Ideas we conceive of them ſhould make ſome Impreſſion upon our Imagination, at leaſt, that the Names we give them ſhould do ſo, otherwiſe it would be impoſſible for us either to remember or ſpeak of them.

If Things extraordinary, and ſuch as have yet no Name be the Subject of our Thoughts, our firſt Care is to endeavour to give them proper ones; and in doing this, we uſually form them according to the Touch that our Thought impreſs'd on our Brain; and what ſo frequently occaſions a Pain in expreſſing our Thoughts is, the Traces in the Imagination not being clear and diſtinct enough, but rather very much clouded and confus'd, ſo that we are at a Loſs by what Terms to expreſs them.

In ſhort, the external Repreſentations, which we make of Things by our Speech, in a great Meaſure anſwers the Internal Repreſentation, that is made in our Imagination: If this be exact and expreſſive of our Thoughts, our Diſcourſe will thereupon become clear and eloquent, but if it be imperfect or unlike, our Diſcourſe will be dark and confus'd: And for this Reaſon a Man ſhould not only have a Sufficiency of Knowledge, but a Livelineſs of Imagination likewiſe, that is able to repreſent the juſt Conceptions of his

his Mind truly, in order to his becoming eloquent.

'Tis farther neceſſary to remember what has been ſo often repeated, that it is a Matter of pure indifference to our Thoughts, by what Touches they affect the Imagination, but what Sounds they are pronounc'd, or by what Characters tranſcrib'd on Paper.

Theſe things being premis'd, we come now to ſtate the Notion of *Energy*: And to me it appears, that a Language is then truly *Energick*, when the Terms and Expreſſions of it make the Hearer conceive Things, with the ſame Clearneſs and Perſpicuity, the ſame Extent and Profoundneſs, that the Speaker has in his Mind, inſomuch that at the very Moment we hear him ſpeak, we ſeem to have before us the very ſame View and Proſpect of things, that he has.

This I think is the very Eſſence of *Energy*. But it ſhould be obſerv'd that this *Energy* depends in part upon the Conduct of the Hearer, who, by the Subtlety and Strength of his Underſtanding, ſhould be able to diſcern in the Terms, that the Speaker employs, the full Import of his Mind.

We obſerv'd but juſt now by what Steps our Thoughts are reduc'd to writing; but it is certain that every Step they take, they always loſe ſomething of their Perfection. Our Thoughts, that are purely Spiritual, cannot but ſuffer ſome Diminution in the Corporeal Images that repreſent them, and in Proportion to their declenſion from Spirituality, are weaken'd, *i. e.* we do not imagine Things as perfectly as we ſpeak them; we ſpeak them leſs perfectly than we imagine them; and we write them ſtill leſs perfectly than

we ſpeak them. The firſt Draught that is made in the Imagination, does not equal the Original in the Thought; the expreſſing it in Words makes it leſs reſemblant, and the writing it more unlike than ever. But what does the Mind of a quick and penetrating Reader in this Caſe? Why it aſcends by the ſame Degrees, that the Thought deſcended, from writing to ſpeaking, thence to the Imagination, and thence to the Underſtanding, where the Thought was at firſt conceiv'd; and there pondering and meditating on the Thought, he ſupplies it with whatever it loſt in the groſs and corporeal Images, through which it paſs'd. And when a Man by this Means, comes to comprehend the Object of the Author's Thought, as fully as himſelf did, then has the Author's Words all the *Energy* they can have. All this muſt be done to underſtand the full Import of the Author's Senſe; and 'tis done with more or leſs Facility, in proportion to the Reader's Parts; for *Energy* requires in the Reader, almoſt as much Learning and good Underſtanding, as in the Author.

I have hitherto only ſpoke of the Effects of *Energy*, but come now to explain what it is that produces it, *i. e.* what it is that makes Words ſo very powerful and efficacious, as to carry into the *Hearer*'s Mind, all the Weight and Grandure of the *Speaker*'s Thought, and this, in my Opinion, ariſes from the Compoſition of Words, Phraſes and Periods.

It ariſes I ſay, from the Compoſition of Words; becauſe *Simple* and *Primitive* Words can ſignify no more than one Thing, one ſingle Idea, one Thought, and one Action: So that to ſwell the Signification of Words, we make uſe of ſuch as

are

are long and compound, which by their Length and Compoſition may enlarge our Ideas, and for this Reaſon, *Tongues* that abound with Words of this Kind have neceſſarily moſt *Force* and *Energy*.

The Compoſition of Phraſes and Periods contributes ſtill more to this *Energy*. Certain Terms joyn'd together, certain Phraſes us'd in a ſprightly and judicious Compoſition, produce Effects, which they could not do in any other Conjunction. They may be compar'd to the ſeveral Parts of Machine, which when aſunder have no Force, but when conjoyn'd, can raiſe up the greateſt Weight; or to the Stones of a Vault, which by the Dexterity of their Cut and Joynings, cannot only ſupport themſelves, but the heavieſt Load that is laid upon them: And in like manner, certain Expreſſions rightly connected, produce Effects, which while they were ſeparate, could never have been thought on.

Figurative Terms and ways of Expreſſion are another Cauſe of this *Energy*. For theſe Terms, being commonly taken from things that ſtand high in our Reſpect and Eſtimation, have a great Tendency to make us conceive great Ideas of what we would recommend; as on the other hand they have a marvelous Efficacy to inſuſe the Sentiments of Contempt and Averſion, when we would diſparage. Nay, even Pronunciation itſelf gives an *Energy* to Words; and the great Admirers of *Greek* and *Latin* ſeldom fail to inhance the Value of thoſe Languages upon that Score: But this is not ſo properly the Eloquence of *Tongues*, as it is of Men. We can pronounce our own *Tongue* with as much Emphaſis as they can *Greek* or *Latin*, nay we can do it with a better Grace, and upon better Reaſons, becauſe

we are aſſur'd of the right Pronunciation of our *Tongue*, which they cannot be of the other.

Now if theſe are the chief Cauſes of the Force and Efficacy of Speech, I ſhould deſire to know what Grounds Men have to pretend that one Language has a greater ſhare of it than another. Let but a Man think juſtly, and have a lively Imagination of what he thinks, and then ſtrong and ſignificant Words will neceſſarily follow his Imagination, if there are any ſuch in the *Tongue* he ſpeaks; for want of *proper* Terms he muſt make Uſe of *figurative*, and when he cannot expreſs himſelf otherwiſe, even frame and deviſe *new* ones himſelf.

But there is no *Tongue*, wherein all this may not equally be done; none, that is not capable of this Compoſition of Words and Periods, of Number and Cadence, which make a Diſcourſe *Energick* and ſtrong. Thoughts in themſelves, have no Affinity and Sympathy with one *Tongue* more than another; and therefore what was at firſt expreſſed in *Hebrew*, *Greek*, or *Latin*, may be render'd in *French* with as much Beauty and Loftineſs, as in any of them, if he that renders it has but a full and adequate Notion, how great and beautiful it is in the Original.

To make the Beauty of a Man's Shape appear, it ſignifies nothing what Colour his Cloaths are of, ſo long as they are cut and faſhion'd by an able Taylor; and in like manner, to convey a Thought to our Senſes, it makes not much matter, in what *Tongue* or Form it is cloath'd, provided the Man, that does it, has but a thorough Knowledge and Underſtanding of it. But this will receive a farther Illuſtration from what is the Subject of the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Why the Greek *and* Latin *Tongues are ſuppos'd to have more* Energy *than others.*

ONE Cauſe, that makes ſome Men prefer *Greek* and *Latin* before any Modern *Tongue* in point of *Energy*, is the Inability of ſome Tranſlators, who, either not ſufficiently underſtanding the *Tongue* of their Author, or the *Language* they tranſlate into, or not having Capacity and Penetration enough to enter into the full Force of the Original, have not repreſented, in their Tranſlation, all that was contain'd in the *Greek* and *Latin*; becauſe what they did not underſtand they could not expreſs. Whenever this happens, inſtead of aſcribing the Defect to the Tranſlator, as they ſhould, Men generally impute it to the Language he tranſlates into, and from this miſconception form the Compariſon; whereas let but a Tranſlator perfectly underſtand his Author, and be a thorough Maſter of his own *Tongue*, and he will make *Tranſlations* equal to *Originals*, as we have Inſtances not a few in Men of our own Nation.

We ſhould not however have near ſo many Tranſlations, if none undertook to tranſlate, but ſuch as have the aforeſaid Capacities; becauſe there is no ſucceeding in a work of this Nature without them. A Man ſhould almoſt equal his Author in Learning and Ingenuity; he ſhould at leaſt be able to follow his Senſe in every Part, to raiſe himſelf as high, and penetrate as far into the Subject, as he did; and then he will not

fail to tranſlate well, and to make his Copy come up to the Original.

Tranſlations too are often thought inferior to Originals, when in reality they are not ſo; and from this prepoſſeſſion it is, that Modern Languages are ſo far degraded. In the Courſe of our Studies we form ſuch lofty Notions of Ancient Authors, that we cannot beleive any verſion can come near them; Criticks employ all their Knowledge and Ingenuity to make vaſt diſcoveries in the Works of Antiquity, and we our ſelves can hardly be perſwaded, that any Men of our Age, whom we daily ſee and converſe with, can be able to bring into ſuch a Tongue as ours (which from our Infancy we ſpeak in common with Tradeſmen and Peaſants) all the beauties that are found in them.

Nay, Tranſlators themſelves moſt commonly begin with ſuch a ſeeming diſtruſt and diffidence, both of their own Abilities and the force of the Tongue, wherein they are going to write, that the Reader very eaſily perſwades himſelf, that the Tranſlation he has before him, will not be found comparable to the Original. 'Tis decent indeed for Men not to preſume too much upon themſelves, but if they have reaſon to be diffident of Succeſs, Prudence ſhould direct them to ſpare their Pains; nor would I ever adviſe Any Body to pretend to tranſlate, that is not ſatisfy'd that he can expreſs, in his own Tongue, all that his Author has done in *Latin* or *Greek*, and that full as well too.

I would then intreat thoſe learned Criticks and Tranſlators, who pretend that nothing can come near the Force, the Beauty and the Delicacy they perceive in the Original, for once to condeſcend

deſcend ſo far, as to explain (with as many Words and Circumlocutions as they pleaſe) what there is, ſo very great and ſublime in thoſe *Greek* and *Latin* Terms and Phraſes, they ſo much admire. What cannot be explain'd by one Word in Expreſſion, may certainly be done by many; and if after all the Talk we allow them, they cannot make us comprehend the whole Extent of the Senſe, they pretend to ſee, they will not be offended I hope, if we tell them that they fancy they ſee, what in Reality they do not; that by the Heat of their Fancy, and working of their Brain they have ſubtilis'd their Author ſo, as to make him think what he never dreamt of; and that he himſelf (if he were now alive) would be aſtoniſhed to ſee what exquiſite Pains the Learned of this Age have taken, to make him ſpeak what he never once intended.

'Tis with very good Reaſon, that thoſe, who have diſtinguiſh'd themſelves in the Art of Criticiſm, ſhou'd be accounted a ſort of Prophets and Diviners: For, in truth they oftener prove ſo, than Explainers of their Authors. *Ariſtarchus* was call'd by this Name, for writing Four Score Books of Commentaries on *Homer*. He tortur'd his Brain ſufficiently, no doubt, to find ſo much matter in the Dreams and Raveries of that Poet, but he had one misfortune in all his vaſt Commentaries, the want of a ſufficient Warrant for what, he imagin'd, was *Homer*'s meaning.

Such is the uſual Prepoſſeſſion of all Commentators or Tranſactors; or perhaps it may be their Artifice to avoid Cenſure and appear Learned. We never blame a Man for not being able to do, what, he ſays, is impoſſible; and

ſince,

ſince Wit and Learning is not diſcernable, but by Perſons of the like Abilities; it may be thought no bad pretence to theſe Qualities, to know how to diſcover the like among the Ancients. If we were to ſuppoſe that *Horace* had not ſo much Wit and Delicacy in him, leſs of both wou'd be requir'd to underſtand him: or the Remark of *Quintilian* is very true, *viz.* that we have the ſame Complaiſancy for our ſelves, when we enter into a Sublime and Delicate Thought, as if we our ſelves were the Authors of it: * *Cum intellexerint acumine ſuo, delectantur, non quaſi audierint, ſed quaſi invenerint.* When therefore theſe Men ſhall plainly ſhew us the Beauties they boaſt of, we will really believe they are there; but while they only try to make us open our Eyes wider than ordinary, to admire things, which they do not explain, but by *je ne ſai quois*, they muſt not be diſpleas'd, if we cannot believe that their Authors contain ſo many hidden Myſteries, as they wou'd perſuade us.

Another Cauſe of Prepoſſeſſion very advantageous to the *Energy* of the *Greek* and *Latin Tongues*, is our uſually getting by heart their beautiful Paſſages, and, whenever we have occaſion to make uſe of them, repeating them in their own Words and Phraſes. Hence it comes to paſs, that, by perpetually repreſenting the ſame Ideas under the ſame Signs, we accuſtom our ſelves to confound them ſo, that we cannot ſee how they can be ſeparated, or how it is poſſible to delineate that ſame Thought ſo well

* *Quint.* 8. 2.

well in any other Word or Expreſſion: And this is the Foundation of the common prejudice, that the Language, wherein a fine Thought appear'd at firſt, always ſuits beſt, and can never ſo well accord with any other.

Theſe are ſome of the Cauſes, that give ſo great a Pre-eminence to ancient *Tongues* above the Modern; but Reaſon has nothing to do in all this. Let us but conſider the *Ancients* as Men like our ſelves, be perſwaded that what one Man has invented, may be done by another, and learn to ſtrip their very fineſt Thoughts from the *Greek* and *Latin* Phraſes, wherewith they are array'd; and then we ſhall perceive that there is no great diſparity, but that all Languages are good and elegant, when we come to be acquainted with their Spirit and Idiom, and can fully comprehend their Author's Senſe.

Mr. *Laboureur*, in his Verſion of the Thirteenth *Ode* of the Fourth Book of *Horace*, has juſtify'd in a great meaſure what I here advance: He has reder'd it Verſe for Verſe, and Stanza for Stanza, and a Man muſt be ſtrangely prejudic'd, not to confeſs that the *French* not only equals, but even excels the *Latin*. Whether Mr. *Creech* has been ſo happy in his *Engliſh* Tranſlation of the ſame *Ode*, I leave to Men of Critical Knowledge to determine: I thought however, that it might be no incurious Entertainment to my Reader (eſpecially that Mr. *Laboureur*'s Book is become ſo very Scarce) to give the *Ode*, and both the Tranſlations together.

Audivere,

AUdivere, Lyce, Dî mea vota: Dî
Audivere, Lyce, ſis anus, & tamen
Vis formoſa videri,
Ludiſque & bibis impudens,

Et cantu tremulo pota cupidinem
Lentum ſollicitas: ille virentis &
Doctæ pſallere Chiæ
Pulchris excubat in genis.

Importunus enim tranſvolat aridas
Quercus, & refugit, te quia luridi
Dentes, te quia rugæ
Turpant, & capitis nives.

Nec Coæ referent jam tibi purpuræ,
Nec clari lapides tempora, quæ ſemel
Notis condita faſtis
Incluſit xolucris dies.

Quo fugit Venus? heu, quove color decens?
Quo motus? quid habes illius, illius
Quæ ſpirabat amores?
Quæ me ſurpuerat mihi?

Felix poſt Cynaram, notaque & artium
Gratarum facies: ſed Cynaræ breves
Annos fata dederunt,
Servatura diu parem

Pornicis vetulæ temporibus Lycen.
Poſſent ut juvenes viſere fervidi,
Multo non ſine riſu,
Delapſam in cineres facem.

MES vœux ſont contens, Iſabelle, [vœux,
Oui, les Dieux, de leur grace, ont contenté mos
Te voilà vieille, & cependant tu veux
Faire encore la belle.

En vain, d'un chant grêle & tremblant
Tu rapelles l'amour, en vain tu ris, tu jouës,
Il t' abandonne, & s'en va ſur les jouës
De la jeune Yoland.

Loin des troncs ſechez il s' arête,
Et ne prenant plaiſir qu'aux fleurs, qu'aux Myrthes verds,
Il fuit la nége & les triſtes hyvers,
Qui blanchiſſent ta tête.

Ni le brocard, ni les rubis
Ne ſauroient à ton mal aportet de remede,
On ſait ton âge, & la vielleſſe eſt laide
Sous les plus beaux habits.

Ce teint tout de lis & de roſes,
Cette grace & ce port qui m'avoient enchanté,
Las, où ſont ils ? & que t'eſt-il reſté
De tant d' aimables choſes ?

Iris n'avoit rien de plus beau ;
Mais dès ſon orient le ſort fut jaloux d'elle,
Il nous l'ôta pour laiſſer Iſabelle
Vivre autant qu' un Corbeau.

Aux jeunes gens il la veut rendre
Un objet ridicule à leur flâme opoſé,
En leur montrant d'un flambeau tout uſé
La famée & la cendre.

The

THE Gods have hear'd, Lyce, *The Gods have hear'd,*
The Gods have hear'd my Pray'r,
As I have wiſh'd and you have fear'd,
You're old, yet would be counted fair:

You Toy, you Impudently drink, to raiſe
Your Lazy dull Deſire,
You ſtrive to heighten to a blaze
With your cold breath the dying Fire.

In vain; 'tis all in vain; Coy Cupid *flies,*
A better ſeat he ſeeks,
In young ſoft Cloe's *Face he lies*
And gently wantons in her Cheeks:

Coy he flies o'er dry Oaks, he ſcorns thy Face,
Becauſe a furrow'd Brow
And hollow Eye thy form Diſgrace,
And o'er thy Head Age ſcatters Snow.

Nor can thy coſtly Dreſs from th' Eaſtern ſhore,
With all the Gems it bears,
Thy former lovely Youth reſtore,
Nor bring thee back thy ſcatter'd Years;

Thoſe Years which the Eternal Wheel hath ſpun,
And drawn beyond thy Prime,
Thro' which ſwift Day hath nimbly run,
And ſhut in known Records of Time.

Where is that Beauty, where thy Charming Air,
That ſhape, that Am'rous play?
Oh! What haſt thou of her, of her,
Whoſe ev'ry look did Love inſpire,
Whoſe ev'ry breathing fan'd my fire,
And ſtole me from my ſelf away?

Mr.

Mr. *Le Laboureur* gives us this Apology for the Variation he makes from the *Latin* in his Tranſlation. *The Raillery wou'd not be juſt*, ſays he, *among us, to repreſent a Woman amidſt Pots and Glaſſes, or to make a Deſcription of her black Teeth and Wrinkles: The* Roman *Ladies*, adds he, *were not ſo ſober, as ours, nor were their Gentlemen ſo gallant, as we.*

CHAP. XVI.

Whether Energy *in* Tongues *be a Fault, or Perfection?*

'TIS oppoſing a Torrent, I know, declaring againſt Reaſon, and taking up Arms againſt all the Grammarians that ever liv'd, nay, againſt ſome of the moſt ſenſible and judicious Enquirers into Philoſophy, but barely to preſume to think, that *Energy* is not one of the greateſt Perfections of any Language. This is what every one will tell us: But in the mean while, if we wou'd not be too haſty in our Judgment, but give ourſelves Leiſure to reflect upon the Reaſons, that may make this matter doubtful, we may perhaps be induc'd to confeſs, that there is ſome difficulty in the Queſtion.

If all that is ſaid in favour of Perſpicuity be true, if it be founded on Nature and Reaſon, then cannot *Energy*, which is always oppoſite to

to Perſpicuity, be any great Commendation in a Language; ſince two qualities, that deſtroy each other, cannot be perfections in one and the ſame Subject: And yet there is nothing more certain, than that *Energy* and *Perſpicuity* ſeldom meet together.

When a great deal of Senſe is compris'd in one and the ſame word, or in a ſmall number of Words, how ſhall we do to comprehend it all? It is rather a Set of Enigmas, propos'd on purpoſe to be explain'd, than a Diſcourſe, that was made to be underſtood.

I am very ſenſible that prolix Diſcourſes are ſeldom lik'd, and that ſuch as are ſhorteſt, are naturally moſt agreeable: * *Naturaliter compendium Sermonis & gratum & neceſſarium, eſt, quoniam ſermo lacinioſus, & oneroſus & vanus eſt*, ſays *Tertullian*, who was one of the greateſt admirers of Brevity, that ever wrote; but if this Brevity occaſion ſo much Obſcurity, as it did in this Author (who ſhou'd have a particular Grammar and Dictionary to underſtand him) wherein is it praiſe-worthy? *Quintilian* indeed commends a Brevity that's entire, *merito laudatur brevitas integra*, that is to ſay, ſuch a Brevity, as expreſſes all that is neceſſary to be expreſs'd, in order to remove all obſcurity and be perfectly underſtood; *nihil neque deſit, neque ſuperfluat*, and ſuch an one, as in no wiſe retards the Underſtanding, or makes a Concealment of the Senſe, *moras rumpens intempeſtivas, nihil ſubtrahit cognitioni.* If ſuperfluity be a Fault, a Deficiency is no leſs, nay much more ſo, ſince it directly

* *De Virg.*

rectly oppoſes, what is the chief end of imparting our Thoughts, which is to be underſtood.

Now I would gladly know of theſe Gentlemen the Criticks, where theſe Languages are to be met with, that admit of this commendable Brevity; and in what Inſtances a Man may expreſs himſelf as clearly, in a few words, as in many. 'Tis a Maxim in all Languages, that the * Affectation of too great a brevity neceſſarily betrays us into obſcurity, and when a Man ſpeaks obſcurely, 'tis almoſt the ſame thing as if he ſpake unintelligibly, ſince no one can be aſſur'd of the Senſe of an obſcure Speech, and a Speech that is unintelligible, is, in *Quintilian*'s Opinion, vaſtly trifling and unprofitable. † *Otioſum Sermonem dixerim, quem Auditor ſuo Ingenio non intellexerit.*

And if there be no great Pleaſure to hear a Man ſpeak, whoſe Diſcourſe we cannot comprehend, there is, in my Opinion, much leſs to read a Book of this Character, where an affected Brevity caſts an obſcurity on all ſides. If others love not to read much; if they account *a great Book a great Evil*; I, for my part, love leſs to Study, and to Study without any certain and real profit: And am of Opinion, that there is more Satisfaction in reading a large Book, which is eaſy and intelligible, than one of a ſmaller ſize, whoſe Words and Phraſes are like ſo many Cyphers and Hierogliphicks. For let us but compare the work of eaſy reading with that of intenſe ſtudying, and meaſure the

* *Brevis eſſe laboro Obſcurus fio.* Hor.
† *Quin. Lib.* 8. *c.* 2.

time that is expended in both, and then we ſhall ſoon ſee which has coſt us moſt, and thence perceive, what ſmall Reaſon we have to commend a Brevity, that muſt coſt ſo much painful and unſucceſsful Study, and that a greater compaſs of Words had been more Eligible, to make the matter more obvious to our apprehenſion.

It may well become indeed the great Ruler of the Univerſe to ſay a great deal in a few Words, as he has done in the Holy Scriptures: It ſuits his Grandure, to diſtribute the Treaſures of his Wiſdom in what manner, and according to what meaſure, he pleaſeth; nor ſhou'd Man be aſham'd to make the Language of his Sovereign Lord his Study: Thrice happy he, who, with all his Labour, can diſcover any of thoſe Truths, that are therein contained, and whoſe Knowledge and Practice are his utmoſt Happineſs! But what Superiority has another Man over me, ſo as to deſerve, that I ſhou'd rack and torment my ſelf, merely to find out his meaning?

Truth is a common Good that belongs alike to all Mankind; and when it pleaſes God, who is the Fountain thereof, to make it known unto any, 'tis for no other purpoſe, but that he ſhou'd diſtribute it to others, as gratuitouſly as poſſible; *i.e.* very clearly, and very intelligibly; for to retail Truth in ſuch a manner, as to make it unattainable, without great Labour and Trouble, is to *Sell it much dearer than Silver.* 'Tis a precept of the *Wiſe Man*'s, that we * *ſhou'd*

* *Prov.* 23. 23.

ſhou'd buy Truth and ſell it not. And the Senſe of that Precept is, that we ſhou'd ſpare neither Money nor Pains to come at the Knowledge of Truth, but that, when we are ſo happy as to have attained it, we ſhou'd then communicate it with all the freedom and facility imaginable.

God reveal'd his Myſteries, as it pleas'd his Almighty Will, and directed the *Tongues* and Pens of his Prophets and Apoſtles in a manner, he judg'd moſt proper for the Execution of his purpoſes: He mingled Light and Shadows, Brightneſs and Obſcurity, in their Language; but the Fathers wrote in another way, when they had found out the Senſe of the Scriptures by laborious Meditation, they diſtributed to others, that were not ſo converſant in them, ſuch Truths, as they diſcover'd therein, with all imaginable eaſe and plainneſs, to make them more intelligible. They purchas'd Truth at a great Price, but afterwards freely beſtow'd it: But in the Languages and Books that have a Name for *Energy*, Men act a quite contrary part; they ſell Truth dearer than it coſt them, by overſpreading it with ſuch Difficulties, as this *Energy* occaſions: Commentaries upon Commentaries are compil'd to find out the true meaning of ſuch Authors, and ſometimes all of them will not ſuffice to give the Reader full ſatisfaction.

But to take a nearer view of the thing, a Man might be tempted to ſay that this *Energy*, is not only a Cauſe of great Obſcurity, but an Argument likewiſe of great Poverty and Barrenneſs in any Language. The Language certainly, that has Names for all Things, Verbs for all Motions, and Expreſſions for all Ideas,

is therefore incomparably more perfect, becauſe it is more clear, having no neceſſity to uſe Words and Phraſes in different Senſes, and being ſo far free from Equivocation and Ambiguity.

It is not poſſible indeed that any *Tongue* ſhou'd have as many Locutions or Forms of Diction in it, as Men may conceive Ideas of Things, becauſe their Thoughts are boundleſs; but it is nevertheleſs certain, that the more Copious a *Tongue* is, the more valuable it muſt be, becauſe where there is no need to expreſs ſo many different things by one and the ſame Word or Phraſe, there is leſs liability to Equivocation, and a nearer approach to what is the ſovereign perfection of *Tongues*. 'Tis acknowledged indeed that a Language ſo extenſive wou'd be very difficult to learn, but then the certainty of our Knowledge wou'd abundantly recompence our Trouble.

We may then, I believe, be permitted to doubt, whether the *Energy*, we are ſpeaking of, deſerves all the Commendation, that Men commonly imagine; for my own part, I muſt own, I have not that penetrating Genius, nor am I able to undergo the Labour of ſearching to the bottom of this abſtruſe Quality; I love a Language that is more eaſy and familiar, for ſince *Tongues* are compos'd of Signs, the more certain and preciſe theſe Signs are, the more valuable, in my Opinion, muſt ſuch *Tongues* be.

Suppoſing it were true then, that a *French* Man, for Inſtance, cou'd not expreſs in leſs than four words, what a *Greek* or *Roman* wou'd ſay in two; yet ſhou'd not I eſteem the *French* Man leſs, nay, perhaps, I ſhou'd eſteem him more,

more, ſince I ſhou'd thereby be better aſſur'd of the Truth of what he is teaching me, nor know I, in ſhort, any eſtimation due to any myſterious Expreſſion, except it be thoſe of the Prophets of the true God.

But when it is pretended that in *French* we muſt uſe more words to render the Senſe of a *Latin* Author, we uſually take into our account the Articles, Pronouns, and auxiliary Verbs, which is a wrong way of reckoning. The Pronoun and Verb that governs it, are in effect but one Word, the Article and Noun, the auxilary and principal Verb are the ſame. Nouns and Verbs are the only Eſſential Parts of Speech; all the reſt do but contribute to the Elegance and Cadence of it, and ſhou'd not come in to the Number; ſo that according to this Computation the inequality will ceaſe.

But ſuppoſe the Caſe, that every word were reckon'd, and that Four in *French* went to expreſs One in *Latin*; yet is the advantage of this multiplicity ſo great, both to remove all Ambiguity and Equivocation, and to compact our Diſcourſe, and make it fluent and harmonious; that I dare venture to ſay, the effects of the multiplicity in the *French* are infinitely preferable to any thing that can enſue from this paucity of Words in *Latin*.

But to ſpeak of things as they are in fact, if *Energy* be ſuch a Perfection in a *Tongue*, all *living* Tongues are ſuſceptible of it. Cuſtom affixes many Figurative and Adventitious meanings to Words and Phraſes, which are quite loſt when the *Tongues* go out of uſe, becauſe Books cannot preſerve them all, and thoſe that endeavour to regain them, labour, as it were, to

raiſe the *Tongue* it ſelf, and reſtore it to Life again, which is a vain attempt; for how can thoſe loſt Meanings be recover'd which were only preſerv'd by uſe or living Tradition? Criticks have no Secret to effect this Miracle, and their Gloſſaries, in many things, are but pure Conjectures.

The beſt expedient, in this Caſe, wou'd have been ſuch Dictionaries, as we have in our *Tongue*, which wou'd have preſerv'd the true force and ſignification of Words in ſome meaſure; I ſay, *in ſome meaſure*, becauſe, when all's done and ſaid, uſe is the beſt Maſter of Languages, and 'tis in vain to flatter our ſelves with the hopes of learning them perfectly any other way: But now this uſe being no more in dead Languages, becauſe they are dead, and have ceas'd to be employ'd in the Commerce of Life, it muſt be impoſſible to find out their true *Energy*, or re-eſtabliſh them in their former Perfection.

From what has been ſaid, it ſeems to be plain, that *Tongues* have always more *Energy*, while they are *living*, than when *dead*; which may likewiſe include the Reaſon, why *dead* Tongues are eaſier to be learn'd, than *living*; becauſe, ſince the Time they were dead, they have loſt a conſiderable part of what they were before, *viz.* a great deal of their *Energy*, and of the extent and depth of their ſignification.

'Tis in this Senſe, that the late Mr. *Menage* had ſome Reaſon to ſay, that it was more difficult to know *living* Languages perfectly, than the Dead; and that tho' he had been ſtudying the *French* Tongue Fifty Years, he was not as yet become Maſter of it, he might, no doubt, have made himſelf Maſter, in that time, of all

was

was contain'd in *Roman* Authors, becauſe their compaſs is limitted: But *living* Languages are, as it were, without Bounds, becauſe they depend upon Uſe, and Uſe, every Day, makes either ſome Additions or Alterations in them, and thereby deſtroys all certainty of knowledge.

And if *living* Languages are ſo hard to underſtand, 'tis a mere Deluſion to pretend to know *Latin* and *Greek* ſo perfectly, ſince do what we will, we can but know them, as *dead* Tongues; *i. e.* ſuch as have loſt a great Part of what they were. There are beſides in every *Tongue*, certain Terms and Modes of Expreſſion, which are not to be found in any other nor can be render'd without Circumlocutions; and if the *Energy* of *Tongues* conſiſts, in a great meaſure, in theſe, there is no reaſon to appropriate it to one more than another. The Time may come, on this preſumption, the Time may come, when Men may ſay the ſame fine Things of the *Tongue*, we now ſpeak, that Criticks do of *Latin* and *Greek*, and may find in our Writings the ſame inimitable Beauties, and Graces, and Delicacy, and Force; if they will but abate us the Brevity and *Laconiſm* of ſome ancient Authors, becauſe we cannot reliſh ſuch irregular Compoſitions, ſuch lame and curtail'd Sentences, as are to be met with in Authors remarkable for this property, ſuch as *Thucidides* and *Tacitus*. Our Genius is abhorrent to this manner of Writing, which is more blamable for its obſcurity, than praiſe worthy for its force; and if theſe Writers have gain'd a Reputation, it has been for ſomething elſe, more than their *manner*, for their good Senſe and not their

Stile, which no competent Judge ever yet commended.

CHAP. XVII.

Of Number and Harmony.

HAVING already ſhewn that all the above-mention'd Perfections of Language are equally common to one *Tongue*, as well as another; 'twill be no hard matter to do the ſame with relation to *Number*. Number in Language is nothing elſe but its Harmony and Cadence, *viz.* when its Pronunciation gives a ſenſible Pleaſure to the Ear, to the Imagination, and even to the Underſtanding it ſelf; for neither the Senſe nor Imagination are touch'd with Pleaſure, but what the Mind partakes in, nay, there is a kind of *Number*, that the Mind alone can properly judge of.

This Harmony is call'd *Number*, becauſe the Proportions from whence it reſults, are meaſur'd by Numbers. But this holds good in Muſick only, for the Harmony of Language depends more upon the Senſe of Hearing, than any Rational Judgment; 'tis enough, however, that it is the Effect of certain Proportions, to make it be call'd by that Name, for, *Omnis Harmonia & Concentus Numeris conſtant.*

The greateſt Difficulty that occurs in this Queſtion of *Number*, is to know how Grammarians and Rhetoricians can diſpute about it, and upon what ground they can maintain, that ſome

ſome Languages, in this regard, have a pre-eminence, ſince 'tis certain, that, to judge of the Harmony of *Tongues*, and give any one a due Preference, we muſt not only have an equal Knowledge in the Harmony of the *Tongues* we are comparing, but a juſt Notion likewiſe of what is *Eſſential* and *Original Number*, which is to be our Rule in the Compariſon, and the Standard whereby we may judge of their reſpective Perfections; for that which comes neareſt to this *Original Number* muſt, without all diſpute, be the moſt perfect.

Now this is what we are at a loſs for, we have not a diſtinct Notion of *Original Number*, and cannot conſequently, upon any Principles of Reaſon, make a juſt Diſtinction of the Harmony of *Tongues*, and if we ſay that the Ear is the proper judge in this Caſe, the Ear we know cannot help being prejudic'd in Favour of one particular *Tongue*, and will neceſſarily incline to what is natural to it, as being beſt acquainted with its Pronunciation, and accuſtom'd to it, from its Infancy; and if the Ear is ſure to be thus perverted, What Juſtice can we expect from its determination, and how frivolous muſt the Diſputes of Grammarians be upon this head, when the Deciſions therein are ſo uncertain?

In ſhort the Harmony of a *Tongue* depends moſt certainly upon its Pronunciation, and therefore, know it perfectly, both the Mouth and the Ear ſhou'd be attemper'd to it: For he, that pronounces a Language not right, ſpoils its Harmony, and he, that is not accuſtom'd to its right Pronunciation, cannot reliſh it. This is what St. *Auſtin* remarks, when he writes to his Friends about

his

his Books of Muſick, wherein he properly treats of Pronunciation; he ſays, that 'tis no eaſy matter thoroughly to underſtand them, and one Reaſon that he gives is this —— that Words ſhou'd be pronounc'd in ſuch wiſe, that, not only the length of each Syllable, but the pauſes likewiſe, and reſts, that ſhou'd interfere at certain intervals, be perceiv'd and felt, otherwiſe we can neither remark the Cadence of a Diſcourſe, nor make the Ear ſenſible of it. His words are theſe, * *Verum etiam pronunciando ita ſonare merulas ſyllabarum, ut eis exprimantur, ſenſumque feriant, genera Numerorum. Maximè quia etiam in quibuſdam dimenſa Intervallo miſcentur; quæ omninò ſentiri nequeunt, niſi Auditorem Pronunciator informet.*

Experience will ſhew us the Truth of this. They, that pronounce our *Tongue* with too much Precipitation, ſtartle and ſurpriſe us, and thoſe that ſpeak it too ſlowly, tire our Patience; becauſe the one does not fill the Ear, and the other makes it languiſh. This is an Obſervation that *Cicero* himſelf takes notice of † *Numeros aures ipſæ metiuntur, ne aut non compleas virbis, quod propomeris, aut redundes.* For give one of the fineſt pieces of Eloquence, by Men of ſome Counties, that have a vicious pronunciation, to ſpeak, and they'll ſoon make it loſe all the graces of its *Number* and Cadence.

If then it be certain, that Pronunciation is the thing that makes Number, it is likewiſe certain, that we cannot know the Number of a *Tongue*,

* *Epiſ.* 13, *ad Memorium.*
† *De Orat. Parſ.* 1.

Tongue, whoſe Pronuneiation we are not perfectly acquainted with; and conſequently, have leſs reaſon to pretend to underſtand the Number of a *Tongue*, whoſe Pronunciation we are abſolute Strangers to. Now that we are intirely ignorant of the *Latin* and *Greek* Pronunciation (which is the point in queſtion) needs no other Proof, than the perpetual Conteſts, that have been among learned Men concerning this matter. Time after Time have Treatiſes been publiſh'd about the true Pronunciation of Languages, but never one appear'd yet, that did not meet with ſome to contradict it.

The Truth is, every Nation adjuſts theſe *Tongues* to its own Dialect and Pronunciation, we pronounce them after the *French* manner, the *Germans* after theirs, and the *Polanders* after theirs, and ſo of other Nations; which is the true Reaſon, that theſe different Nations do not underſtand one another, even when they ſpeak *Latin*; and has occaſion'd ſeveral diverting Stories, beſides that of *Scaliger*, who deſir'd a *Scotch* Gentleman, that was ſpeaking to him in *Latin*, to be pleas'd to excuſe him for not underſtanding him, becauſe he had never learnt *Scotch*.

But we have a ſtronger proof that neither our *Tongue* nor Ear are made for the true Pronunciation of *Latin*, and that is, our pronouncing their Verſe quite otherwiſe than we ſhou'd. There are ſome Verſes that we make longer by two or three Syllables, than we ſhou'd according to the Number of Illuſions, that occurs in them; and yet our Ear is ſo far from being ſhock'd at this, that on the contrary, it wou'd certainly,

certainly be ſo, if we were to pronounce them according to their true Meaſure. Thus in

Multa quoque & bello paſſus.

We pronounce the *que* as ſtrong, as any other Syllable, and yet, according to the right Pronunciation, its Sound ſhou'd be hardly perceiv'd. St. *Auſtin* obſerves in ſeveral places, that the *Africans* had no Notion of *long* and *ſhort* Syllables. I have already mention'd a Paſſage, wherein he tells us, that they cou'd not diſtinguiſh the Pronunciation of the Word *Os*, ſignifying *a Bone*, from the ſame Word, when it ſignify'd *a Mouth*; and yet he aſſures us, that the *Romans* had a different way of pronouncing it according to its different acceptation; *i. e.* they pronounc'd it either *long* or *ſhort* according as it ſignify'd *a Bone*, or *a Mouth*, otherwiſe his Remark wou'd be of no avail: And we perhaps are as little able as the *Africans*, either to expreſs or diſtinguiſh the difference of ſuch Pronunciation.

The ſame Remark he makes in his *Books about Muſick*, where he tells us, that the true Pronunciation of *Latin* is loſt, and that few now a-days (meaning of the time wherein he wrote) were able to diſcern the falſe Cadence of this Verſe.

Arma virumque cado, Trojæ qui primus ab oris.

I can hardly believe that any one, at this Day, can pretend to perceive this Fault, otherwiſe than by Reaſon, and by what he hath learn'd of the quantity of Syllables, which is our

our only ſure Knowledge of the *Latin* Pronunciation.

All this is enough to ſatisfy us, how imperfect our Knowledge is of the manner of pronouncing that *Tongue*; a truth, which the Gentlemen of the Academy, in their Learned and Judicious Preface to their Hiſtory, have made no difficulty to acknowledge; for *dead* Tongues ſay they, *inſtead of their true and natural Pronunciation, which is entirely loſt, have but an Arbitrary one*; and therefore I wou'd have told that Perſon, who made it his wiſh to have heard *Cicero* Harangue, that he ſhou'd, at the ſame time, have wiſh'd to have been born a *Roman*, and in the ſame Age, when *Cicero* liv'd; otherwiſe, he wou'd not have had all the Pleaſure he imagin'd in hearing that great Orator: In many Places he wou'd have been ſhock'd at his Pronunciation, and perhaps in ſeveral Words not underſtood him.

What I have obſerv'd concerning the Pronunciation of *Latin*, may equally be apply'd to the *Greek* Tongue. The late Mr. *Menage* is of Opinion, that we ought to pronounce it, as they do at preſent in *Greece*, and calls it mere madneſs to pretend to pronounce it, as they did Two Thouſand Years ago. If there is any Reaſon for this Opinion, it muſt ariſe from hence, that we have ſome certainty in what manner the *Grecians* pronounce at preſent, but can have none at all how they did it ſo long ago; And if we have no knowledge of this ancient Pronunciation, how come we to boaſt ſo much of its Cadence and Harmony? *Scaliger* in one of his Books tells us, that all the World admires the *Greek Jambick* Verſe, but few

few or none underſtand it, and is it not egregious Folly then, to admire ſo highly what we do not underſtand?

To be ſhort, the Caſe naturally ſtands thus; we are born in different Ages and different Climates, and therefore our Organs are not intirely like the People's that ſpoke theſe *Tongues*. For this Reaſon (if there were no other) we muſt articulate the Letters and Syllables, and conſequently pronounce our Words otherwiſe, than they did. And if after this, we diſpute about the Harmony of *Tongues*, we only ſpeak by Conjecture, and according to our prejudice, Reaſon can have no ſhare in theſe Diſputes; and conſequently we enter into them without its Countenance and Protection.

Some People are of Opinion that theſe Queſtions might be decided by Rules of Muſick, and that ſuch *Tongues*, as are moſt proper for Muſical Compoſitions, are doubtleſs the moſt harmonious. But ſuppoſing it true, that there are certain Languages more eaſily adapted to a variety of Notes, (which is a point I cannot give up) yet how ſhall we know, that any *Tongue* has this aptitude, without knowing its Pronunciation; ſo that there is ſtill a neceſſity of being aſſur'd of its Pronunciation.

Others pretend, that ſome Letters being more ſoft and eaſy to pronounce, as *b* and *ſ*, and others on the contrary more harſh and difficult, as *m* and *r*, the *Tongues*, that abound with the former, cannot fail of touching the Ear more agreeably, whereas ſuch, as make uſe of the latter, muſt of courſe wound and fatigue it; and conſequently the former muſt have the preference in point of Number. To this they add, that ſuch *Tongues* as contain the greateſt number of Words compounded of Vowels only,

have

have ſtill the advantage in point of Harmony, becauſe all Sound lies in the Vowels.

Now, tho' we of this Nation ſhou'd agree in theſe Obſervations, becauſe they make for the advantage of our *Tongue*; yet I very much doubt whether Men of all other Nations will do the ſame. Rules of common uſe and general approbation ſhou'd be laid down, otherwiſe there's no concluding upon any certainty. The Nations, that ſpeak Languages ſo full of Conſonants, will never agree to theſe Principles: They will pretend, that the harſheſt Letters, articulating the Voice ſtronger, and making a greater effect upon the Organ, make a greater likewiſe upon the Mind and Imagination; and that the *Number* of their *Tongue* conſequently is more powerful and ſtrong: They will alledge too that Words, which have few or no Conſonants in them, are not ſufficiently diſtinct from the Crys of Beaſts, to form a Language for Men: And if there is colour for ſuch Allegations, it will then follow, that every one will reaſon about theſe matters according to his particular Temper, and the make of his Organs; *i. e.* according to his prejudice. Thoſe that have Organs eaſy to be mov'd will deſire to be touch'd but lightly, whereas thoſe that have ſtrong and heavy Organs, will like the Language that occaſions a ſtronger Senſation.

It is certain then, that, according to the ſtate of Nature Things cannot be otherwiſe. The Organs of the Speech are always proportion'd to thoſe of the Hearing, and the Articulation of the Voice adjuſts it ſelf to the Senſation of the Ear: And for this Reaſon it is, that every Nation is prejudic'd in Favour of its own

Tongue,

Tongue, and accounts it more beautiful and harmonious than any other; inſomuch, that a Man, who naturally ſpeaks *Slavonick*, cannot but believe that his Language (how harſh ſoever it may be with Conſonants) has a *Number* as moving and agreeable in it, as any other *Tongue* of the higheſt Repute and Eſtimation.

The Advocates for *Latin*, 'tis true, wou'd fain perſuade us, that they are more affected with the *Arbitrary* Cadence they give it, than with that of their own *Tongue*. They think it beautiful even in this ſtrange Pronunciation, and how much more ſo wou'd it be in its Natural? Whether I argue well or no I cannot tell, but for my part, I think, I may affirm the very contrary; that our own *Tongue* is ſo very beautiful, that I am pleas'd to hear others pronounc'd after it; and, ſince the Gentlemen, that make this Remark, pronounce *Latin* in the manner they do their Natural *Tongue*, 'tis plain that their Natural Pronunciation is the thing that pleaſes them.

In Schools and Colleges indeed we are taught to pronounce *Latin* with a great Emphaſis and Majeſty, to raiſe it, by this pompous manner, above the Level of our *Native* Tongue: But if the matter lay in ſwelling the Mouth, and ſtraining the Lungs, we might give as big a Sound to our own *Tongue*, and that with better Reaſon, becauſe we know for certain the true manner of pronouncing it.

Were it my Buſineſs to compare *Tongues* together in point of harmony, I might produce ſome very good Reaſons to ſhew the excellency of the *French* in this reſpect. That the *French* is naturally *Numerous*, appears from its ſimple and

and eaſy Compoſition, in which it ſurpaſſes the *Latin*, where the Words muſt be tranſpoſed and the order of Conſtruction revers'd, to give it a tolerable Cadence. This one Conſideration is enough to decide the matter in favour of *French*, ſince natural Beauties are always more eſtimable than any other.

If then it be true, that we cannot perfectly taſte the *Number* of any *Tongue*, but what is natural to us, becauſe our Organs were made for the Pronunciation of that alone, theſe ſort of Diſputes are pure Amuſements; and, to ſpeak according to the plain Notions of Reaſon, one *Tongue* can no more excel another in *Number*, than in any other Quality.

Now there are two ſorts of *Numbers*, that may be diſtinguiſh'd in every Language, one, that is purely *Natural*, and ſuch as ariſes from ſimple Pronunciation; the other *Artificial*, and occaſion'd by a proper Diſpoſition of Words, and Compoſition of Periods; neither is there any *Tongue*, wherein theſe two ſorts of *Numbers* are not to be found: For ſince all *Tongues* are equally the work of Nature, and form'd by the natural Uſe of our Organs, they muſt all neceſſarily have this natural *Number*, becauſe it is impoſſible to form a Diſcourſe, without carrying the Voice to ſuch a proportion, and certain meaſures of Elevation and Depreſſion, wherein this Natural Number conſiſts. 'Tis impoſſible, I ſay, for a Man to ſpeak otherwiſe: He muſt of neceſſity force out and draw in the Air in this proportion, and therefore, in reſpect of *Natural Number*, all *Tongues* are equal. * *Id numeroſum*

* *Cic. de Orat.*

meroſum eſt in omnibus ſonis atque vocibus, quod habet quaſdam Impreſſiones, & quod metiri poſſumus Intervallis Equalibus.

'Tis this *Number* that not only preſcribes the length of Words, and hinders their exceeding ſuch a quantity of Syllables (as Eight for inſtance; for none I believe exceed that, and but very few come up to it, becauſe many Words of ſuch a length plac'd together would break the meaſures of the elevation and depreſſion of the Voice, and conſequently the Reſpiration) this natural *Number*, I ſay, not only regulates the length of Words, but the extent of our Phraſes and Periods likewiſe. It requires us to compriſe a Thought in a certain Quantity of Words and Phraſes, that the Lungs may be able to pronounce it without Fatigue, and our Mind comprehend it without Trouble: And this is what all Men do naturally.

Artificial Number conſiſts in a ſtudy'd Arrangement of Words and Phraſes, in order to compoſe ſuch Periods, as, by the Cadence of Pronunciation may be more eaſy and agreeable to the Ear. For 'tis certain, that the more Harmonious any Diſcourſe is, the more eaſy it is to pronounce, and the more agreeable to hear. A Man cannot ſpeak with Eaſe, but he will be heard with Pleaſure, and whoever undertakes to compoſe (be it in what *Tongue* ſoever) ſhou'd always conſult this *Number*. Even our own *Tongue* (tho' very plain and natural in its Conſtruction) is nevertheleſs ſuſceptible of this; and we may perceive a great deal of difference between the Compoſitions of Learned Men, and others, in this particular: For tho' we are not allow'd to confuſe or reverſe the Conſtruction

ſtruction of our Language, as the *Romans* did theirs; yet there is ſtill a great Art requir'd in the Diſpoſition of our Words, the Connection of our Phraſes, and the Turn of our Periods.

I might mention another ſort of Number, that ariſes from a perfect agreement between the Stile we write, and the Subject we write upon; a Number, as I ſaid, that the Mind alone is capable to judge of, tho' every is *Tongue* ſuſceptible of it; becauſe there is no Language wherein we cannot ſpeak of little Things in a *ſimple* Stile, of moderate in a moderate, and of great and mighty matters in a pompous and ſublime; wherein, in ſhort, we cannot compoſe, on all the ſorts of Subjects, according to the Rules of the moſt perfect Eloquence.

Experience has long ſince taught us, that there is no Subject, that does not agree with the *French* Tongue, even to the great Myſteries of Religion; no Science, that may not be taught therein, whether it be Law, Phyſick, or Divinity; tho' it were better to teach the e things in *Latin*, both to keep up a Commerce of Sciences among Learned Men of different Nations, and to oblige Students to draw them from their proper Fountain.

We may then, at laſt, venture to ſay, that there is no *Tongue*, wherein may not be found Eloquence enough to make a *Cicero* or *Demoſthenes*. Let us but have Genius's anſwerable to theſe two great Orators, and we may carry any *Tongue* to as great a perfection as they did *Latin* and *Greek*, becauſe in any *Tongue* may be found that Order, Connection, and Number, that

make up the Beauty of a Language. * *Feliciſſimus Sermo eſt, cui & rectus ordo, & apta junctura, & cunijs numerus opportunè cadens contingit.*

But to conclude this Queſtion to every one's ſatisfaction; tho' ſome Languages, by virtue of their Cadence, may better agree with ſome ſort of Subjects, they will not be found ſo convenient for others; one has it in Strength, another in Harmony and Sweetneſs; each has enough to acquit it ſelf with, and none any right to a Superiority.

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* *Quint. Lib. 9. Chap. 4.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of Sublimity *or* Loftineſs.

SUBLIMITY or *Loftineſs* is one of the principal Effects of the *Energy* and *Number* of a *Language*; ſo that to have prov'd that all *Languages* have their *Number* and *Energy*, is enough, one would think, to ſhew that they have all likewiſe their *Sublime*, and that there is nothing in Eloquence ſo magnificent, that may not be attain'd in one *Tongue* as well as another. Or if it be true that the Nobleneſs of Thought is the true Cauſe of the Sublimity of Stile, may not Men of all *Languages* have equally great Thoughts and Conceptions?

But becauſe this *Sublime* is of ſo great Eſtimation in Eloquence, that ſome of the moſt famous Rhetoricians of Antiquity have thought it worth while to make entire Treatiſes about it, it may not undeſerve a Chapter by itſelf. One of theſe Treatiſes that has eſcap'd the Injuries of Time is that of *Longinus*, tho' it be ſomewhat defective. This excellent Piece has been given us in *French* by an * Author every way capable to compoſe the *Original*, and one may ſay that his Tranſlation and Reflections are enough to convince us that the *Sublime* belongs no more to the Genius of particular *Tongues* than particular *Men*.

* Sir *Boileau Deſpreaux*

I have ſeveral times read over this Work; and how excellent ſoever it may be, it does not in my Opinion give us any preciſe Ideas wherein this *Sublime* conſiſts. He tells us indeed in the firſt Place what are its *Effects*, then what are its *Cauſes*, and comes at laſt to give us Examples of the true and falſe *Sublime*, but in all this it does not appear to me that he determines wherein it conſiſts.

For to ſay that the *Sublime* is *that which conſtitutes the Excellence and Sovereign Perfection of Diſcourſe --- that which raviſhes --- that which tranſports, and produces in us a certain Admiration mix'd with Wonder and Surpriſe --- that which elevates the Soul, and makes it conceive a greater Opinion of itſelf*: All theſe Expreſſions give us a full Conception of the wonderful *Effects* of it, but they leave us ſtill to ſeek what is the *Cauſe* of theſe *Effects*. They give us to underſtand, that when we feel ourſelves raviſh'd and tranſported with ſome maſterly Stroaks in a Diſcourſe, there muſt be ſomething *Marvellous* in it, but this is not ſhewing us what the Nature of that *Marvellous* thing is; ſo that in what *Longinus* has ſaid, he has not ſufficiently inſtructed our Reaſon, and yet 'tis by the Light of Reaſon, that we are to become Learned and Wiſe.

But who dare undertake to ſupply what is wanting in a Work of ſo great a Reputation? 'Till ſome abler Hand than mine ſhall do it, I hope I may be allow'd to propoſe my Conjectures, only ſo far as they may be neceſſary for the Execution of my Deſign.

What we call the *Sublime* then I take to be nothing elſe, but a lively and perfect Imitation either

either of Nature, or of what ſurpaſſes it. The Imitation of Nature is the *Sublime* of Orators, the Imitation of what is above Nature the *Sublime* of Poets; and I ſhall hereafter have Occaſion to ſhew, why Poetry requires ſomething Divine and Supernatural in it.

As nothing is more grand and admirable than Nature, that which imitates it perfectly, and preſents us with lively and reſemblant Images, will always appear truly Great and Sublime: And as Nature is not uniform in her Operations, does not always proceed in the ſame Method, but has ſometimes her Prodigies and Miracles; a lively Expreſſion of theſe Prodigies is that, wherein the *Sublime* and *Marvellous* principally appears.

Herein, as I conceive, does the *Sublime* conſiſt, which produces all the wonderful Effects that *Longinus* ſpeaks of, and this Idea, in my Opinion, agrees exactly with all the Precepts that he hath laid down to attain it. Nay, this Idea is conſonant to his own Thoughts of the Matter: For when he ſays that in the Works of Art we conſider the Labour and finiſhing, but in thoſe of Nature, the *Sublime* and *Wonderful*, he plainly means that the *Sublime* and *Wonderful* in Diſcourſe, is that which rightly repreſents the *Sublime* and *Wonderful* in Nature, and tho' he here mentions the extraordinary Effects of Nature only, and ſeems to inſinuate that there can be nothing *Sublime* in the Repreſentation of common things, 'tis nevertheleſs certain, that an excellent Picture even of the moſt common things, will always touch and raviſh the Soul, for what is there in Nature ſo vile and deſpicable, that when thoroughly examin'd and truly repreſented,

does not produce an Admiration mix'd with Aſtoniſhment and Surpriſe? When the Royal Prophet ſays, *how wonderful are thy Works, O, Lord, in Wiſdom haſt thou made them all*, he includes therein the Worms of the Earth, the Leaves of the Trees, and the Hairs of our Head, as well as the Elements, the Heavens, and the Plants. God is wonderfull in all things, and the leaſt of his Works cannot be attentively beheld without Aſtoniſhment, nor does the *Sublime* of things ordinary and extraordinary in Nature differ, but in the Degree of being more or leſs ſo.

Nay even thoſe Paſſions that have nothing great in them, and are rather Indications of a Littleneſs and Weakneſs of Spirit, ſuch as Affliction, Fear, Sadneſs, *&c.* may be ſo well painted and ſet forth, that the Soul may feel itſelf as much mov'd and tranſported thereby, as by the Repreſentation of what we account the greateſt Things. Nor is there any Reaſon to ſay, there can be nothing *Great* and *Sublime* in a lively Deſcription of the Fright and Aſtoniſhment Men will be ſeiz'd with at the great Solemnity of the laſt Judgment, and this I verily believe is what *Longinus* intended by theſe Words, that *Art is never in ſo high a point of Perfection, as when it reſembles Nature ſo ſtrongly, that it may be taken for Nature itſelf.*

Now if according to this Notion this *Sublime* be able to produce all the Effects that *Longinus* aſcribes to it, it may likewiſe be taken from thoſe Cauſes that he remarks: And the *firſt* of theſe is a certain Elevation of Mind that makes us think happily of Things: For in Truth, what is it to think happily of things but to conceive them juſt as they are, or to ſpeak *Sublimely* of them

them, but to expreſs them juſt as we think them.

The Second Cauſe is the *Pathetick*, that is, as he explains it, that *Enthuſian* and Natural Vehemence that moves and affects us, but now no Orator that has receiv'd this Vehemence from the Author of Nature, ever uſes it well but when he ſpeaks according to juſt and Natural Ideas; when he goes beyond theſe he turns obſcure and *bombaſt*, and becomes ridiculous.

The Third Cauſe proceeds from Figures turn'd after a certain manner. Now to turn theſe Figures well, we muſt always make them natural, *i. e.* take them from Objects that have a natural Relation to the Subject we are treating of, otherwiſe inſtead of ſhewing the greatneſs, they will only diſcover the littleneſs of an Imagination.

The Fourth Cauſe is Nobleneſs of Expreſſion, but this comes much to the ſame thing with what I have ſaid before, *viz.* that if a Man thinks a Thing happily, and expreſſes it as he thinks it, he cannot but expreſs it Nobly.

The Fifth and principal Cauſe is in the Compoſition and Order of Words, in all their Magnificence and Glory, which is the ſame with *Number* that I have already treated of. But this Compoſition conſiſts in following the Order, wherein the Thoughts and Ideas we conceive of things are moſt naturally painted. So that all we can learn from what *Longinus* has told us about Cauſes of *Sublime* tends only to inſtruct us in this, *that to ſpeak in a great and exalted manner is to repreſent either Natural or Supernatural Things as beautiful, as great and marvellous as they really are.*

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The Examples that he produces, confirm the ſame Thing. There is not indeed any thing great and magnificent in theſe Examples, but as they repreſent Nature in ſuch lively Characters, that one would think it were Nature itſelf that ſpeaks. The Anſwer of *Alexander* to *Parmenio* has ſomething very great in it, becauſe it perfectly paints the bold and ambitious Nature of that Prince *Parmenio*, whoſe Heart had not conceived ſo great Deſigns as that of *Alexander*, would have been content to have marry'd *Darius*'s Daughter, and had part of *Aſia* for her Dower. But *Alexander*, whom the whole World could not ſatisfy, would not hearken to the Propoſal, and his Anſwer to *Parmenio* could not well have more Grandure in it, becauſe it repreſents to us, in a very delicate and lively manner, the unbounded Ambition of that Conqueror, for it is in Ambition that the ingnorant and corrupted World places all greatneſs of Soul. *If I were* Alexander *ſays* Parmenio *to him, I would accept of the Offer that* Darius *makes me, and I too if I were* Parmenio, *ſays* Alexander.

The Expreſſions he quotes from *Homer*, derive their Loftineſs from their repreſenting Nature as great as it really is. But the Words of *Moſes* are the moſt ſtately and magnificent that can be pronounc'd by the Mouth of Man, becauſe they carry a true and moſt ſenſible Character of God's Omnipotence, by ſhewing that his Word was enough to make all Things ariſe out of nothing, and if *Longinus* had made all the Reflections upon this Expreſſion of *Moſes* that it deſerv'd, and a Perſon of his Sagacity ſhould have done, he would not have aſcrib'd it to the Invention of this great Legiſlator; he might have perceiv'd

that

that Man could not have invented ſuch an Expreſſion of himſelf, and that he muſt neceſſarily be inſpir'd by the Divine Wiſdom to do it. Since if there was requir'd an Infinite Power to give *Fruitfulneſs* to *Nothing*, and Man having no Natural Conception how *Nothing* could become *Fruitful*, he could not have expreſſed it ſo worthily, had not the Being, in whom this Power reſides, ſuggeſted it. But this is not a Place to ſhew at large what Knowledge a thinking Man may draw from theſe Word, *He ſpoke and all Things were made, he ſaid let there be Light and there was Light.*

Theſe, in my Opinion, are the cleareſt and moſt preciſe Ideas of what we call the *Sublime*, and if they are true in Fact, I can ſee no Reaſon why every *Tongue* ſhould not be furniſhed with proper Materials to draw the moſt reſemblant Pictures of every thing that Nature can produce; o every great and wonderful thing that Men can ſay or do; nay of every thing that God has revealed to them, either as an Object of their Faith, or a Rule for their Practice. Why, for Example, might not a *Demoſthenes* or a *Cicero* Thunder and Lighten in our Language as well as they did in theirs? Why might not *Moſes* have ſpoke in *French* what he did in *Hebrew*, and with the ſame Dignity and Majeſty: Let Men labour the Point as much they pleaſe, they will never be able, I believe, to find out any ſufficient Reaſons why there ſhould be any Difference.

The Admirers of *Greek* and *Latin* perhaps may imagine, that ſome *Tongues* are not ſo proper to keep up all this Elevation of Thought, becauſe the Nations that ſpeak them may not have the Hardineſs perhaps that the *Greeks* and

Romans

Romans had, to make uſe of ſuch bold Figures and Expreſſions, as ſometimes tranſcend the Truth. But if theſe Nations are more modeſt in their Stile, their *Sublime* is therefore truer and leſs liable to become *Bombaſt*. We, for inſtance, in this Nation, are not near ſo hardy, in our manner of Speaking; but our chaſte and modeſt Eloquence is more regular, and ſhould therefore pleaſe Men of exquiſite Taſtes better. For if it be true that our *Tongue* values itſelf upon its Moderation and Chaſtity; if it does not love to make uſe of ſuch Expreſſions, as pleaſe none but Men of irregular Imaginations, and ſuch as are blinded with Self-Conceit, then is it preferable in this Reſpect both to the *Greek* and *Latin*.

In ſhort, all thoſe that have Taſte good enough not to take *Bombaſt* and Nonſenſe for *Sublime*, will find, that the *French* will admit of all Sorts of Figures which are contain'd in the Rules of true Eloquence, from whence true Greatneſs of Expreſſion comes; for therein we treat of ſuch Subjects as requite the *Sublime* and *Marvellous* with all imaginable Succeſs. That which conſtituted the Eloquence of the Pagans, related to Temporal Things only, but Chriſtians have Subjects that has no other Bounds than Eternity, and if it has been ſaid of the Princes of the *Greek* and *Roman* Eloquence, that *they ſtorm'd, they thunder'd, they lighten'd, that it was all a conſuming Fire, and a Torrent that overwhelm'd every Thing*; the ſame may be ſaid with more Reaſon and Truth of ſome of our Preachers, who change *Wolves into Lambs*, and *Vulture into Doves*, and do greater Wonders by the Power of *the Word*, than what fabulous Poets have imputed to the Power of their Gods.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

That all Languages are capable of all ſorts of Compoſition, whether Proſe or Verſe; with ſome Obſervations upon the Latin *and* French *Verſification.*

Have already ſhewn that every Language is capable of ſuch Qualities, as make a Diſcourſe clear, neat, intelligible, ſtrong, and Energick, or give it a Nobleneſs and Elevation extraordinary; and may thence conclude that they may all be employ'd in any kind of Compoſition, whether *ſimple*, *mean*, or *ſublime*, in Proſe, or in Verſe. This is what Mr. *Charpentier* has already ſhewn in regard to the *French* Tongue, in his Treatiſe *about the Excellency thereof*; and the moſt ſolid Reaſons that he there alledges, are equally applicable to all *Tongues* in general, as is likewiſe all that Mr. *le Laboureur* has ſaid, *concerning the advantages of the* French *Tongue above the* Latin, when the Diſpute comes to be between *Tongue* and *Tongue*, and not between Man and Man.

This Deſign has in ſome meaſure been executed by Mr. *Perrault*, in his *Parallels between the Moderns and Ancients*; wherein he ſhews, that the *Moderns*, or rather the *French*, (for 'tis from them that he draws his Compariſons) do equaliſe the *Greeks* and *Latins* in all Arts and Sciences; that our Philoſophers, our Poets, our Orators, our Hiſtorians, are not inferior to the moſt famous among the Ancients; and at the

ſame time he proves, that the *French* Tongue can ſupply us with every material, that the Beauty, the Force, and Sublimity of either Eloquence or Poeſy, can require.

I ſhall not therefore ſtay to ſpeak to what others more able than my ſelf have already treated of; I ſhall only crave leave to make ſome Obſervations on the *Latin* Verſification, and our own, without aſſuming any Authority, but with all ſubmiſſion referring my ſelf to better Judgment.

Meſſieurs *Le Laboureur*, and *Sleuſe* have diſputed a great deal about the Structure of the *French* and *Latin* Verſe, each labouring to ſupport the *Tongue* that he eſteemeth moſt.

Mr. *le Laboureur* is for the *French*, and Mr. *Sleuſe* for the *Latin* Verſification, the one likes Rhime, and the other the Cadence of long and ſhort Syllables: But 'tis but making Rhim'd Verſes in *Latin*, and Unrhim'd meaſur'd Verſes, or Rhim'd and Meaſur'd both in *French*, and a great part of the reaſons of their Diſpute will vaniſh, and no preference be found between the two Languages on that account.

But to go to the Bottom of their Diſpute, I am of Opinion that both theſe Kinds of Verſification are faulty, in that they have too much apparent Art in their Compoſition. For, firſt of all this Art cramps Men of Wit, and runs them into ſuch Licenſes, as Reaſon wou'd never excuſe, were it not for this reſtraint; for what reaſon can there be for eſtabliſhing ſuch Rules, as oblige us to break the moſt eſſential, and conſequently the moſt inviolable, Rules of Speech? And after all, this viſible and affected Art does but diſguſt in the end, being a Repaſt made

made up of *Ragoûts* and high ſavour'd Sauces, for which reaſon, Men of Gravity and good Senſe cannot be brought to ſpend as much Time in reading of Poetry, as they do Proſe.

We may therefore blame the *Romans* for the Invention of their long and ſhort Syllables, ſince they cannot be placed in the Compoſition of Verſe, without tranſgreſſing the Rules of Grammar. Theſe are call'd *Poetick Licenſes* indeed, but they have no Countenance from Reaſon; for what Reaſon can there be, for crowding a Diſcourſe with ſuch Words, as no ways conduce to its Senſe, and, for this Cauſe, cannot but give Offence, becauſe they deſtroy the *neatneſs* of it. They are like pieces in a Machine, which, when of no Service to the Movement, cannot but retard it. What I am ſpeaking of are thoſe Epithites, which are frequently of no other uſe in Verſe, than to lengthen it; we have Magazines of ſuch Words, to furniſh us, according to the matter in hand, with Impliments to fill up the meaſure of our Verſe; nor do I know a better Secret to teach us to compoſe without Judgment, or any thing that leſs becoming ſerious and ſenſible Writers, than ſuch Pieces as theſe: Upon the whole, I know not a more frivolus amuzement than this ranging of Words, and obſerving of long, ſhort, and middle Syllables, for *Aulus Gellius* talks of *middle* Syllables, which are thoſe, I ſuppoſe, that Grammarians diſpute the Quantity of.

Nature, whoſe ſimplicity we cannot too much ſtudy and admire, loves no ſuch Reſtraints as theſe: It wou'd walk free, not jumping and bounding, like the manag'd Horſe, nor

mov'd

mov'd with Springs, like Machines: It wou'd expreſs it ſelf with eaſe and uniformity, without obſerving ſo very exactly the Length of Syllables, ever in Verſe; and if Verſe on all hands is allow'd to be more meaſur'd, much leſs can ſuch Reſtraint be becoming in Proſe.

Whether the *Romans* were ſcrupulous Obſervers of ſuch meaſures in their common Diſcourſe, I cannot tell, but it ſeems to me, that this affectation did not well comport with Perſons of their Gravity: They might have better left theſe little matters to the *Grecians*, and continued within the bounds of their Character, applying themſelves to the Solidity of Things, and not the Cadency of Words.

The ſame Fault that has been found with the *Romans* for their meaſure may be found with the *French* for their Rhime; a Childiſh Art, that at laſt wearies the Ear, by perpetually ſtriking upon it with the ſame ſound; and tho' we are much more ſtrict in our manner of Verſifying, yet theſe Rhimes often times make us give our Thoughts and Expreſſions another Turn, than what is Natural, and ſometimes we may perceive that the latter Words of the Verſe are taken in rather for the Rhime, than the Senſe; ſo that theſe Rhimes have the ſame effect upon the Juſtice of Compoſition, that the 'foremention'd *Epithites* have.

I may be deceiv'd, but in my Opinion, our Verſe wou'd have much more Beauty, more Grandure, and more Majeſty in it, if Rhimes were laid aſide; and I have a long while thought that they are the chief Cauſe why *Epick* Poems have not ſo well ſucceeded in our *Tongue*: For tho' there is more good Senſe and Juſtice in them,

them, than in what the *Greeks* and *Romans* wrote, yet this continual Juggle diminiſhes the weight and grandure of the Subjects that theſe ſort of Poems treat of; for 'tis trifling with Words, while one ſhou'd be wholly employ'd about the greatneſs of Things.

It may be ſaid indeed that I am here imputing to Poetry, what is properly the Fault of bad Poets, and that among good Poets, whether *Latin* or *French*, there are not theſe Words to be found, of no other Uſe than to Rhime, or fill up the Meaſure of the Verſe. Happy are thoſe Poets, where Reaſon governs the Uſe of Rhimes and Epithets! but I cannot tell, whether the greateſt Admirers of *Homer*, *Horace*, and *Virgil*, will venture to maintain, that there are no Botches in their Verſes, nor any Word that may be taken away without diminiſhing the Strength and Greatneſs of their Thought; and if our *French* Poets are more chaſte, if our Poetry cannot bear a Word, that is taken in for Rhime-ſake only, then it is plain that there are abundance of Words whoſe Rhime is their principal Merit. Verſification as well as Poetry, takes its Origin from the Scripture, and the firſt Poems that were found therein, were the Models upon which the firſt *Pagan* Poets form'd themſelves, as I ſhall elſewhere ſhew. As theſe Poems were nothing but Songs, they gave them Meaſures proper to be ſung; nor can I think that they were ſollicitous for any other Nicety in point of Cadence, but what made them agree with the Strength of their Lungs, and the Inflection of their Voice: And we perhaps would do better to imitate them in this Simplicity, than to perplex ourſelves with all thoſe Rules that

Men of much Leiſure have with great Application and Study invented. There would be then quite another kind of Variety in the Number of our Verſe, and another Elevation in our Thoughts, if the Mind were not ſtraiten'd, and, as it were, entangled in a Net, by a Multitude of theſe trifling Rules.

Theſe are the Sentiments that occur to me, about the matter of Verſification, and I ſubmit them to the Judgment of Men of good Taſte, being ready to retract them if they are not found conſonant to Reaſon and good Senſe, the only Directors we are to ſubmit to.

CHAP. XX.

Some Cauſes of our exceſſive Eſteem for the Latin *and* Greek, *and Contempt of Living Tongues.*

I have in my Opinion ſufficiently ſhew'd, in what I have already advanc'd that *Tongues* conſider'd in themſelves, and according to their Nature, have nothing that makes one preferable to another, and that in any one of them, a Man may ſpeak with all the Beauty, Force, and Grandure of the moſt judicious and exquiſite Eloquence. If we have been accuſtom'd to other Sentiments, and ſo train'd up in the Courſe of our Studies, it muſt be the Effect of what the Maſters, that had the Care of our Education, prepoſſeſs'd us with.

'Tis certain that in our younger Days we had nothing ſo much peal'd in our Ears as the great Value of ſuch *Tongues* as are taught us at Schools. Our Maſters are perpetually crying up their Beauty, Grace, and Energy, and ſeem to make it their whole Endeavours to impreſs upon our Memories the fine Paſſages of the Authors they teach, inſomuch, that our whole Youth is ſpent in a continu'd Admiration of theſe *Tongues*, without ever hearing any Thing to the Praiſe and Advantage of our own. Nor are they content with ſaying nothing of it, but are always running on in the Commendation of other *Tongues*, in prejudice of ours, and inceſſantly telling us, that the beautiful Paſſages of *Greek* and *Latin* Authors cannot have the ſame Grace,

Force and Delicacy in any other *Tongue*. And now after ſuch Prejudices as theſe, ſo ſeaſonably infus'd, and ſo induſtriouſly improv'd, who could believe any other, but that the *French* is inferior to them?

The proper way however to try this, would be to eſtabliſh Maſters for teaching *French* People *French* in the ſame manner that the *Romans* taught their own Tongue, and we ſhall then ſoon ſee the *French* in an equal Degree of Honour with thoſe *Tongues* that are moſt priz'd. Theſe Maſters would lay out their Endeavours to underſtand it perfectly, in order to teach it well; their own Intereſt too would engage them to procure its Eſteem, and aſcertain its Advantages; ſo that in a ſhort time we ſhould accuſtom ourſelves to do it Juſtice, and account it not inferior either to *Latin* or *Greek*. The ſame thing might be done in all *Vulgar* or *Natural* Languages, as *Italian*, *Spaniſh*, and the reſt, and by this means as high an Eſteem obtain'd for them, as we pay to thoſe that we learn at *Schools*.

A ſecond Cauſe of the great Reſpect we have for the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues is their Antiquity. Every thing that is ancient, even to old Trees and old Houſes, begets a Veneration, and there is a great deal of Reaſon for this Diſpoſition in us, as it proceeds from a very allowable Prejudice, that ſeems to be implanted in human Nature, viz. *That Truth is the ancienteſt of all Things*. This Sentiment made *Ariſtotle* ſay, that whatever was very old, was very deſerving of Reſpect: The *Romans* when they were minded to enhance the Merit of any thing, had a certain way of comparing it to what was ancient, and how

how much we value *Antiques* merely becauſe they are ſo, is ſufficiently known.

But how juſt ſoever this Prejudice may be, it has nevertheleſs its Bounds, and ſhould not be apply'd to all ſorts of matters. The *Heathens* abus'd it, when they carry'd it ſo far as even to pay Religious Worſhip to old Oaks in the Foreſt, it ſhould be reſtrain'd to what has relation to Truth.

In regard to the Truth of Religion then, and the Sanctity of Men's Manners, Antiquity is always preferable to the preſent Age, but in the matter of Tongues and Sciences, we ought to reaſon quite otherwiſe. Mankind at this time are older than they ever were, and ſhould therefore be ſuppos'd to ſpeak and think better than they ever did, and tho' we muſt have Recourſe to Antiquity for Religion and Morality, 'tis in this latter Age on the contrary, that we muſt expect to find the Perfection of *Languages* and *Sciences*. If God in all Ages had thoſe that ador'd him and preſerv'd his true Worſhip among a certain Race of Men, he did not take that Care about Arts and Sciences, but ſuffer'd them to be loſt by Men that were carry'd away with their Paſſions, or taken up with the Neceſſaries and Exigencies of Life; and when they were once loſt, they neither were, nor could be recover'd, without much Labour; ſo that *Sciences* were more and more perfected and enlarged by Time: And if Time was requir'd to make them perfect, then ſhould our Modern *Languages* have ſome Advantages that the Ancient had not; but to cut ſhort the Controverſy, we'll ſuppoſe them to be equal.

The Prejudice of Antiquity has nothing then to do with *Tongues*, ſo long as they are old enough to have receiv'd all the Improvement, all the Politeneſs, Beauty, and Strength, that may properly belong to them.

A third Cauſe of the great Veneration we have for *Greek* and *Latin* ariſes from hence, that in learning theſe *Tongues* we are acquainted with none but the fineſt *Genius* of the *Greek* and *Roman* Antiquity. Their Philoſophers, their Poets, their Orators and Hiſtorians, are the only Men we are always reading, and the Eſteem we have for theſe great Men inſenſibly occaſions *One* for the Tongue wherein they wrote; or (to ſpeak otherwiſe) our Reſpect for the Authors redounds upon the *Tongue* itſelf, and brings us in time to the Habit of thinking, that they could not have wrote ſo many fine Things in any other *Tongue* whatever. Thus *Tongues* become confounded with Authors, and thoſe that take part with the *Ancients* againſt the *Moderns*, do equally take part with the *Dead* againſt *Living* Tongues.

A Fourth Cauſe of this Preference is, that whenever we ſpeak or write in theſe *Tongues*, 'tis always about points of Learning and to learned Men, by which Means they come to be accounted properly the Languages of Sciences; nor can we eaſily bring ourſelves to believe that 'tis poſſible to expreſs them ſo well as in *Greek* and *Latin*.

And if theſe Circumſtances tend to raiſe in our Minds a great Opinion of theſe *Tongues*, the contrary Circumſtances contribute not a little to debaſe our own. We learn it from our Nurſes, which are ignorant and unpoliſh'd Creatures; we daily ſpeak it with all ſorts of People, Tradeſmen, and Peaſants, and almoſt always about common,

common, ſometimes very mean and contemptible Matters, (tho' at preſent it is a little more employ'd in the Commerce of *Sciences*) and if ſo, how can it well be, that a *Tongue* which is employ'd in common by Men of the loweſt Parts, and on the meaneſt Subjects, ſhould have that Place in our Eſteem, with thoſe that are dignify'd and diſtinguiſh'd by ſuch exalted Uſage?

The Fifth Cauſe of this Preference is, the great Reputation that the Knowledge of theſe *Tongues* brings in to thoſe that are acquainted with them. What a Noiſe do the Criticks make in the learned World? Who, in their Opinion, is able to teach the Ancients any thing, to read Leſſons to *Ariſtotle* for *Greek*, or *Titus Livy* for *Latin*? But on the other hand, let a Man ſpeak his own *Tongue* as well as ever *Cicero* ſpoke, yet he will not have a bit the more Eſteem or Reputation for it. And how then can it otherwiſe be, but that Languages which may acquire Men ſuch Renown, ſhould be vaſtly preferr'd before others?

The Sixth Prejudice ſo favourable to dead *Tongues* is, the manifeſt Advantage we find in writing in one Language above another. There are an infinite Number of Thoughts and Arguments that paſs well enough in *Latin*, which would be intolerable in *French*. The very ſhadow of the Terms and Expreſſions of *Cicero*, of *Virgil*, and the other great Authors we admire, makes that paſs upon us for good in its kind, that has neither Juſtneſs nor Solidity in it, whereas if the Thing were once ſtripp'd of its venerable Phraſes of Antiquity, we ſhould ſee it in its real Poverty, becauſe we ſhould ſee it nearer,

and judge of it better: For ſtrange Languages do ſome way or other remove Things from our Underſtanding. How many *Latin* Diſcourſes are there that have been receiv'd with the utmoſt Applauſe, and yet if they were tranſlated even by one of our beſt Pens, would move our Compaſſion for thoſe that admir'd them? So that it is manifeſtly in point of Intereſt, that many give the Preference to *Latin*. And what I may add as a

Seventh Cauſe is, the Arguments of Criticks upon this Matter. If Men have given Names to every Age, according to the Things they were moſt addicted to, this may juſtly be call'd the *Age of Criticiſm*, becauſe Men have carry'd on this ſort of Erudition ſo far, that there is ſcarce an Author that they have not turn'd and turn'd again, almoſt in every Word and Phraſe, into all manner of Meanings. Now this Application, warming the Imagination, cannot fail of enlarging Objects mightily, and ſhewing us ſuch Myſteries as the Authors themſelves never intended: Whereas our own Writers are plain and eaſy, they may be underſtood without much Application, and for this Reaſon we cannot fancy that there are all thoſe excellent Graces and Refinements in them that we think we perceive in *Latin* and *Greek*, and ſo are led on courſe to conclude, that the one ſurpaſſes the other.

It would be no hard matter however to ſhew that theſe Gentlemen the Criticks are neither ſo great Oracles, nor their Knowledge in the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues ſo certain as they imagine, for the Proof of which I need but mention their frequent Diſputes about the Purity of *Latin*, and the Stile of Authors. *Linſius* ſaid of Cardinal *Bembo*, who pretended to take every Term from

Cicero

Cicero, that he many Times did not ſpeak *Latin*, ſo that either *Bembo* or *Cicero* did not well underſtand what *Latin* and their *Cicero* was. Many Inſtances of the like Nature might be produc'd if this were a proper Place, but a ſmall Reading will convince any Man of their diverſity of Opinions in this regard, and how common a Thing it is for one to ſpy Faults in that, which, in the Opinion of others, has been moſt admirably wrote. So that the Art of *Criticiſm* is at the beſt but Conjectural, and perhaps the worſt ſupported of any Conjectural Science whatever.

CHAP. XXI.

That the Reaſons for preferring the Ancients *to the* Moderns *are not ſo ſolid as we imagine.*

I Have above obſerv'd that thoſe who take part with the *Dead* againſt *Living* Tongues, do likewiſe take part with the *Ancients* againſt the *Moderns*, and that theſe Sentiments mutually produce each other. It may not therefore be improper to my Purpoſe, to ſay ſomething concerning the famous Controverſy that happen'd ſome Years ago, between two illuſtrious Authors, about the matter of Compariſon between the *Ancients* and *Moderns*.

M. Perrault maintains the Cauſe of the *Moderns* againſt the *Ancients*, and pretends that the former ſurpaſs them a great deal, not only in Arts and Sciences, but in Compoſitions of Wit and

and Ingenuity. And certainly when we come to make a Compariſon between the moſt excellent Pieces of Antiquity, whether in Eloquence or Philoſophy (for theſe are the chief Topicks of Diſpute) with the Works of ſome of our *Moderns*, we can hardly forbear from being of his Opinion: Tho' we may not be entirely ſatisfy'd with the Arguments he deduces with ſo much Moderation, that even while he is teſtifying what Eſteem the *Moderns* merit, he preſerves at the ſame time all due Reſpect to the *Ancients*; for theſe two Points are not incompatible.

M. Deſpreaux, without ever conſidering that he himſelf is one, that has the greateſt ſhare in the glory of the *Moderns*, is ſo far from ſuffering them to be preferr'd before the *Ancients*, that he even wonders how they dare pretend to equal them. He is, without all doubt, commendable for his Humility, for one can perceive no other Reaſon why he took the part he did, but the Fear his Modeſty had left he ſhould be pre err'd before the *Ancients*, ſince he has never yet vouchſafed us a formal Anſwer to what *M. Perrault* has advanc'd.

What he chiefly does is to deſpiſe thoſe of a contrary Sentiment, as Men without Learning or Taſte: If he ſays any thing it is but curſorily, and what ſhews that himſelf had Anger rather than Reaſon on his ſide, and that his Purpoſe was, more to harraſs his Adverſary about the ſignification of ſome *Greek* Word, than to come to any regular Combat with him.

If ſo mean an Author as I may be allow'd to add any thing to what *M. Perrault* has ſaid upon the ſubject, theſe Obſervations I conceive, may not

not be inconduceable to the ſupport of his Opinion.

1. 'Tis not to be diſputed but that ſeveral of the beſt Pieces of Antiquity, when tranſlated into our *Tongue*, and by ſome of our ableſt Pens, have neither that Grace, Juſtneſs, nor Strength, that may be found in many of our Modern Works; and the only Refuge which the Admirers of the *Ancients* have, at leaſt what I have heard from their own Mouths, is this, that we cannot render in our *Tongue* the Thoughts that are moſt delicate, moſt ſublime, and exquiſite in theſe excellent Originals. But this is only amuſing us with fine Words, and nothing is eaſier than to prove the contrary; and to this purpoſe we muſt diſtinguiſh two ſorts of Beauty in Works of Wit and Ingenuity, that which ariſes from the Thought or Thing, and that which proceeds from the Stile or Expreſſion.' As to *Thoughts*, 'tis not to be diſputed, but that other Men can conceive them as true, as juſt, as beautiful, and as noble as *Plato*, or any of the greateſt Men of Antiquity ever did; for, in ſhort, how can we think but that the Minds of the Men of this Age have the ſame *Force* and *Sublimity* that they formerly had? A Pretence contrary to this is deſtitute of all appearance of Reaſon, ſince to maintain that our Conceptions cannot come up to thoſe of the Ancients, we muſt firſt of all comprehend what the Extent and Height of their Thoughts were, and when we have once comprehended them, why may we not expreſs them? Why may we not in our own or any other *Tongue*, ſay every thing we perceive beautiful in *Plato* or others; but if we perceive or comprehend it not, we ſpeak of what we do not underſtand,

underſtand, *i. e.* we exalt the *Ancients* above the *Moderns*, for Reaſons purely imaginary, and for Beauties that we can give no Notion of.

2. If it be plain and undeniable that the Truths which conſtitute the Beauty and Strength of Thoughts, are in themſelves indifferent, in what Language, Terms or Expreſſions they are deliver'd, provided they appear to be ſuch as they really are, (ſince they have no more affinity to one Sound and Character than they have to others) what Reaſon can there be given why an able Tranſlator may not render in his own *Tongue* all the real and ſubſtantial Beauties, that are found in any *Greek* or *Latin* Authors?

This we may ſay, that the matter ſtands ſo with Truth, as it does with the Soul that conceives it; they both are equally ſpiritual, and equally indifferent to what Body they are united; and as it is of no Conſequence to the Soul in what Body it reſides, whether in *Greek*, *Roman*, or *French*, black or white, ſhort or tall, ſo long as it is ſerviceable to the Exerciſe of its Faculties; ſo is it of no Conſequence to Truth, with what Sounds and Characters it is cloath'd, provided it appears what it really is.

'Tis nothing therefore but pure Illuſion to pretend, that what are real Beauties in the Ancients, may not paſs into any other *Tongue*, ſince this would be a confining of Truth to certain Sounds and Characters, which is a thing that Reaſon will never admit of. But as there is no diſputing the Poſſibility o the Thing, and ſome perhaps may come to Fact, and ſay, that there are not actually thoſe Beauties in Tranſlations, it muſt then be the fault of the Tranſlator, and not of the Tongue.

3. As

3. As for thoſe Graces, which in Language depend upon certain Turns and Figures, that lie merely in the Words, they are of no great Moment, and deſerve our Conſideration and Eſteem no more than does the Gold and Silver wherein precious ſtones are ſet; and ſuch as admire theſe minute Things, give me reaſon to believe, that they have not a due Eſtimation for what are the real Beauties of a Diſcourſe.

But if in our Tongue there are not always found proper Terms and Expreſſions to repreſent the external Graces of every Paſſage (as well as thoſe of the Thought) in a *Greek* or *Latin* Performance (becauſe we muſt allow, that there are ſometimes certain happy Incidents of Words and Expreſſions, which give an *Eclat* to the Thought, but do not always occur in a different Language upon the ſame Subject.) Yet in ballance to this, it may be ſaid, that there are many happy Expreſſions deviſ'd in our Tongue, that are not to be found in the *Original*, and ſo if a Performance on one hand, loſes any part of its Beauty in the Verſion, it is abundantly recompenc'd on the other, by other Beauties it finds in the *New* Tongue, that were not to be found in the *Old*.

This Remark will hold good with a great Number of excellent Verſions, that have appear'd in our Days; and what a great Writer ſays of the Verſion of *Joſephus*, by the late M. *d'Andilly*, confirms the point. *That Tranſlator*, ſays he, *has ſo employ'd the Advantages of our Tongue, that he has found the way of expreſſing almoſt all the Beauties of the* Greek; *where ſome Ornaments were wanting in the* French, *he hath ſubſtituted others that the* Greek *had not, ſo that* Joſephus *has loſt nothing*

nothing by the Change: And yet notwithſtanding this, he has given us the Sence of the Greek *Text very faithfully, and hath made uſe of ſo juſt Expreſſions, that tho' they do not always ſignify preciſely what the Hiſtorian ſays, they always explain perfectly what he would ſay.*

The like thing may be ſaid of ſeveral other Tranſlations, and if thoſe of M. *Dubois* do not always in the ſame Place render Beauty for Beauty, yet in other Places he adds ſuch as ſurpaſs thoſe of the Original, and make his Tranſlations even of *Cicero* himſelf, as eſtimable as Originals. And in like manner if M. *d'Albancourt* has not preſerv'd the Spirit of *Lucian* throughout, he has however, in ſome Places, given him a Spirit and Delicacy, that he never had, and I am verily perſwaded, that if *Lucian* were to appear in the World again, and ſpeak *French*, he could not do it better than *d'Albancourt* has done it for him.

That therefore we may judge right of the merit of a Tranſlation, and make a juſt Compariſon between it and the Original, we ſhould not compare them by Pieces, but the whole of them together; and if it be done by an able hand, we ſhall find the Copy not inferior, nay it will have the Air and Character of an Original Piece, when the Tranſlator is perceiv'd to write under no Conſtraint, but with the ſame Eaſe and Liberty that the Author did.

But to make us comprehend the Truth of what I ſay, *viz.* That Books may be as beautiful both in Thought and Expreſſion, in any *Tongue* they are tranſlated into, as they were in their Original, let us ſuppoſe that ſome of theſe great Perſons of Antiquity, *Cicero* for inſtance, were

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to return into the World, with all their Wit, Knowledge, and Eloquence, both natural and acquir'd, but inſtead of being born a *Roman*, ſhould become a *Frenchman*, and underſtand the *French* Language as well as he did the *Latin*; yet who will venture to ſay that this *French Cicero* could not compoſe in our Tongue with the ſame Succeſs that he did in *Latin*, and that his *French* Pieces would not be as eſtimable, as thoſe that gain'd him the firſt Rank among Orators. There is no Reaſon for ſuch Aſſertion, and therefore we may conclude, that whatever makes the true Merit of any ancient Performance, whether in Wit, Learning, or Eloquence, may be convey'd in our *Tongue* as well as thoſe of an older date; and conſequently if the beſt of their Pieces, tranſlated by the beſt of our Writers, when compar'd with ſome modern Compoſitions, loſe all their Luſtre, and appear but dull, 'tis in reality becauſe they have leſs Juſtneſs and Solidity, leſs Beauty and true Grandure, than are in the other.

I have read ſome of their Pieces, ſuch as *Demoſthenes*, *Plato*, and *Cicero*, as they are tranſlated by Mr. *Mamroy*, but could never find in them all that *dazling Brightneſs*, that *Thunder* and *Lightning* that bears all before it; and, in ſhort, that *inimitable Sublime* that they make ſuch loud boaſts of. If they are good and excellent in their kind, 'tis carrying the Compliment too far to ſay that they may not be equall'd, or even ſurpaſs'd, and perhaps we might have thought them better, if ſo much had not been ſaid in their Commendation.

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The Orations of *Demoſthenes* and *Cicero* are therefore thought their Top Performances, becauſe they contain a great deal of Vehemence and Sublimity, are full of Fire and Indignation, and animated with ſuch Paſſions, as give a Vivacity to Diſcourſe. They might indeed be quite another thing when ſpoke by theſe two great Orators, whoſe Pronunciation we are aſſur'd was admirable, but we ought to remember, that we are here ſpeaking of the Eloquence of the Pieces themſelves, and not the Perſons.

In the *Philipicks* of *Demoſthenes* we find a great Knowledge of the true Maxims of Policy, therein he detects all *Philip*'s Artifices, and ſhews the means how to defeat them; he gives, in ſhort, the *Athenians* the beſt Counſel imaginable, for the Preſervation of their Liberty, and uſes the moſt powerful Motives to engage them to it; but after all, I cannot perceive thoſe wonderful Figures, and Flights extraordinary, that make it paſs for an inimitable Model of the moſt *Pathetick* and *Sublime* Eloquence; nor can we ſay as *Longinus* did, without ſome ſort of Hyperbole, that *'twas eaſier to ſee a Thunderbolt come down from the Heavens with a fix'd and undaunted Look, than not to be mov'd when he ſpoke.*

If at this Day Aſſemblies were held of all the States of *Europe*, wherein all the preſent Affairs might be debated, and the true Intereſt of every Sovereign fairly laid before him, I make no doubt but that we might have Speeches compos'd that would not only equal thoſe of *Demoſthenes*, but perhaps very much ſurpaſs them.

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The Orations of *Cicero* againſt *Verres* are not ſo finiſh'd a Work, but almoſt any of our *Modern* Compoſitions may compare with them, and how many are there that excel them? What is ſaid of this great Orator, viz. *That his Works might be retrench'd*, is true; for the one half of this Piece might be cut off, without the Loſs of any thing neceſſary. His Buſineſs was to implead *Verres*, for his Violences and Oppreſſions, and give a Report of the Informations that had been drawn up againſt him; ſo that this was one of the greateſt and moſt ſerious Subjects that an Orator could handle: But inſtead of this, *Cicero* amuſes himſelf with making Deſcriptions and Hiſtories of ſome little Pieces of Sculpture and Painting that *Verres* had taken from the *Sicilians*, and gives a tedious Account of the Situation and Beauty of the City *Syracuſe*, and of certain Perſons, when perhaps there was not one in the Audience who had not been at the City, and knew it as well as he, conſidering its ſmall diſtance from *Rome*.

All theſe Epiſodes neither agreed with the Majeſty of the Place where he ſpoke, nor with the Dignity of his own Perſon, nor with the Gravity of his Subject; but he lov'd to ſpeak, and thoſe that are willing to admire every thing in the Ancients, find ſomething to praiſe him for, even in his Ramblings. But to ſpeak impartially, *Cicero* has not obſerv'd what was fitting for him to ſay, and ſtrangely tranſgreſs'd againſt what we call *Decorum*, by this mix'd variety of things, whereby he thought to have embelliſh'd that piece. The Subject was too important and melancholly for a Man to think of diverting either himſelf or his Hearers, where nothing

ſhould have reign'd but Indignation againſt the Crime, and Compaſſion for the Criminal, all Mirth is there unbecoming. If he was afraid to weary his Auditory with the length of his Piece, he might eaſily have made it ſhorter, without omitting any thing material, either in Fact or Law, inſtead of amuſing himſelf with idle Tales to divert the Aſſembly; he might have thought, that how good a Speaker ſoever a Man may be, yet he never ſpeaks well, that ſpeaks from the Purpoſe, as he himſelf has it in ſome Places. *Quintilian* will by no means allow, that a Diſcourſe upon an extenſive Subject, ſhould be lengthen'd with Stories and far fetch'd Deſcriptions. * *Non ſit Oratio ſinuoſa, neque accerſitis Deſcriptionibus laſciva*, and St. *Auſtin* is of Opinion, that whatever is ſaid without Reaſon, can never ſavour of Elegance, *non mihi ſonat diſerte, quod dicitur inepte.*

There are many other Faults againſt *Decency* that one might remark in this Piece; he does not only accuſe *Verres*, but he inſults and reviles him, and the ſtroaks of his Eloquence ſhew his Perſonal Hatred againſt *Verres*, more than his Love of Juſtice. The truth is, there appears ſo much Paſſion in his Declamations againſt *Piſo*, *Catiline*, *Claudius*, *Verres*, and *Anthony*, that it impairs the Credit of what he ſays; his Paſſion ſo ſtrongly rules him, that he ſuffers himſelf to be thereby tranſported, even when his Subject admitted of no Invectives; as it happens to him in two or three of his *Paradoxes*, where the matter requir'd cool Blood, and ſhould be treated

* *Lib. 2. Ch. 4*

treated in a plain and close Stile as the *Stoicks* did. And all these Faults of his, are certainly repugnant to the Rules of true Eloquence.

Plato's Dialogues has a great deal of Wit and Lottiness in them. The Justness and Facility whereof appears in the manner, whereby he leads Men into Truth. He recalls the Mind of his Disciple, when it wanders either to the Right Hand or the Left, with plain and easy, but solid and judicious Questions; and thereby makes it enter into the Paths of Knowledge: But as soon as he has made it enter, he does not conduct it far, and almost always leaves it without any perfect instructions in that Truth, which it searches after.

In his *Eutiphron*, he dissipates the false Ideas, that Men form to themselves, about what is *Holy* and *Profane*; but he does not proceed to give us just Notions of them: So that he either leaves his Reader in the dark, or the Lights that he gives him are so very faint, that they are not capable of leading him very far.

In his *Hippias*, he does in a manner the same Thing. We might in that Book expect to find an exact Idea of that which constitutes what we call *Beautiful*, and yet a great many things might be added to what he says. What is agreeable contributes to Beauty, but it does not entirely compleat it; for how many Things are there, that have all that is agreeable to their Nature, and yet are not beautiful, or that may become more beautiful than they are? If there is not more Wit in many of the Discourses of Philosophers in our Days, there is certainly more good Sense and Knowledge. I speak of Philosophers that are truly Christian, for 'tis Knowledge and

a ſound and ſolid Knowledge, that we ought to look for from Philoſophers.

Whether the Reading theſe Authors has had the ſame Effect upon others as it has upon me, I cannot tell; but after I had read them I was perſwaded, that the Tranſlator was none of thoſe that prefer'd the *Ancients* to the *Moderns*. He thought that the eaſieſt way to end the Diſpute, would be to bring the *Ancients* as near the *Moderns* as poſſible, by making their Works appear in our *Tongue*, to the end that we might more eaſily make the Compariſon, and judge of 'em with better Knowledge, and conſequently with more Equity.

For, in ſhort, 'tis almoſt impoſſible to make juſt Compariſons between *Greek* and *Latin* Pieces and thoſe of our own Compoſition. A Man muſt have another Turn of Thought to underſtand perfectly, wherein the Excellency of theſe Pieces conſiſts, from what he muſt have to know a *French* Compoſition. In one Caſe, the Mind muſt have two Objects to conſider, the Things and the Language: In the other his Attention is not divided, but is altogether taken up with the Things. Now this difference of Attention, cannot fail of making the Ballance lean one way or another: Thoſe that account eaſy things not ſo beautiful, will be for *Greek* and *Latin* for this very Reaſon, becauſe they underſtand them not ſo well, and others for contrary Reaſons will be againſt them; whereas if the Pieces under Compariſon be both in the ſame *Tongue*, there will then be but one Difficulty on both Sides, and we ſhall be able to comprehend the Deſign, the Order and Oeconomy of a Diſcourſe, the Juſtneſs and Solidity of its Arguments, and the

the Grandure and Sublimity of its Thought much better. As to the Stile, I have already ſhewn, that *Greek* and *Latin* Compoſitions loſe nothing in that regard, when they are tranſlated by able Hands.

This is by much the eaſieſt way to judge of both, and when the Matter is thus order'd, it can hardly be thought, but that our Judgment ſhould favour the *Moderns*. M. *Maucroix* has manag'd dexterouſly enough, in deciding the Queſtion to the Advantage of the *Moderns*, without expoſing himſelf to the ill humour of thoſe, that admire the *Ancients*; and M. *Deſpreaux*, with all his Learning and Ingenuity, will never be able to reſcue the *Ancients* from the Prejudice they ſuffer by the Compariſon; for the more Wit he has and the better he writes, the more he expoſes the Weakneſs of his Party.

In ſhort the Criticiſm of a *Greek* or *Latin* Word is not the point in Debate, nor is ſuch Criticiſm of any other uſe, than to throw Things into Obſcurity and Confuſion, and to hinder us from ſeeing them clearly as they are; if we would diſpute in earneſt, we muſt oppoſe Principle to Principle, and Argument to Argument, without laying ſuch ſtreſs upon Grammatical Niceties: And if M. *Deſpreaux* would tranſlate us ſome more of *Plato*'s Dialogues, beſides theſe already mention'd, and annex ſome learned Diſſertations to ſhew us the particular Beauties of them, perhaps it might be a better expedient to ſupport his Cauſe.

M. *Bruyere*'s Deſign in his Verſion of the Characters of *Theophraſtus*, was the ſame in my Opinion with that of M. *Maucroix*: He has plac'd them at the Head of his, the better to make us

perceive the Difference: But in Truth, if *Theophraſtus* has done his beſt in drawing the ridiculous part of ſome of the *Athenians*, 'twill be hard to make us believe, that the *Attick* Eloquence was what they would perſwade us. His ridiculous Characters are too ruſtick and immodeſt, to make us believe that his polite and fine Characters ſhould be ſo excellent; for how ſhould ſuch oppoſite Extreams be found among the ſame People, and in the ſame Country? But after all, if the Queſtion about the Point of Preference between the *Ancients* and *Moderns* ſhould ſtill remain doubtful, yet to determine it, there is this to be ſaid, that the Knowledge of the *Moderns* being quite different to that of the *Ancients*, they cannot but write with more Juſtneſs, Solidity and Loftineſs than the *Ancients* did. For tho' we ſhould not exceed the *Ancients* in all Arts and Sciences (which is a Point hardly to be conteſted, ſince the *Ancients* are in nothing ſuperior to the *Moderns*, but in being the firſt Collectors and Improvers of the Remains of the old Traditions of Mankind) tho' we ſhould not I ſay, have a better Knowledge of Humane Sciences than the *Ancients* had, yet the Light of the Goſpel alone, ſhining forth and diſcovering to us without Clouds or Obſcurity, thoſe Truths which the *Ancients* ſaw, as it were, in a Dream, and in a very wavering and uncertain Manner; cannot but communicate to our Compoſitions, many real and ſubſtantial Beauties, that are not to be found among the *Ancients*: And I have often wonder'd that M. *Perrault* has not made mention of this Reaſon, which is ſo very clear and deciſive.

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We may therefore be allow'd to apply to ourſelves, and to thoſe that ſhall come after us, that Saying of *Quintilian*, *That no Age is more happy than ours, ſince all that have preceded it, ſeem to have labour'd only to make ours more refin'd and knowing.* So that were the *Ancients* to come into the World again, they would certainly be ſurpriz'd to ſee us place them in ſo high a Degree of Honour, conſidering the Learning and Experience which Mankind has acquir'd, ſince the Times wherein they liv'd. This verifies the Proverb in the Goſpel, *That a Prophet is beſt honour'd out of his own Kindred and Country*, and what I have ſaid is enough to ſhew, that our preferring the *Ancient* before the *Modern*, and *dead* before *living* Tongues, proceeds from the ſame Prejudice, and has no better Foundation.

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* *Lib.* 12. *Ch.* 10.

CHAP. XXII.

Of the ENGLISH *Tongue. Its Advantages; Its Defects; and what Improvements it is capable of.*

HAT our Author has all along made an Example to the Rules and Principles he lays down, is only the *French Tongue*; which, how applicable ſoever to his Purpoſe, cannot afford all the Satisfaction to an *Engliſh* Reader, that may be expected. He poſſibly may deſire a nearer Application of theſe Rules; and, among the great Number of Languages, that are extant in the World, may be ambitious to know in what point of Light his *own* ſtands; what Progreſs it has already made; what Defects lie ſtill upon it, and what further Degrees of Improvement it is ſuſceptible of.

Now, ſince Words are nothing elſe but the *Signs* of our Thoughts, the firſt great Requiſite in any Language muſt be, to have a ſufficient Number of theſe Signs, whereby to expreſs our Minds. Let us then ſee how it ſtands with our *Engliſh* Tongue, in relation to what we call its *Riches*, or *Copiouſneſs*.

I. The old *Britiſh*, or what we now call *Welſh*, (tho' no barren Language in it ſelf) had a conſiderable Acceſſion made to it, when this *Iſland* became a Province to *Rome*. The *Latin* Tongue,

Tongue,* however was never in its full Purity *here:* For, as few or no Attempts towards a Conqueſt were made until the Time of *Claudius*, ſo, in Proceſs of Time, the *Roman* Legions, which were ſettled here, were all recall'd to help their Country againſt the *Goths*, and other barbarous Invaders. The Laws of the State, and the Ceremonies of Religion however being in *Latin*, (eſpecially where their Arms prevail'd) occaſioned a great Intermixture, tho' ſome of the *Natives* were ſo brave, as to preſerve both their Liberties and Language entire.

After the Departure of the *Roman* Forces, the *Britons*, left to ſhift for themſelves, and daily harraſs'd by cruel Inroads from the *Picts*, were forced to call in the *Saxons* for their Defence. The *Saxons* were not long in the Land, before they affected the Conqueſt of it, and happily perform'd what the *Romans* were never able to do. The greateſt Part of it they reduc'd to their own Power; drove the *Britons* into the moſt remote and mountainous Parts; and the reſt of the Country was oblig'd to ſubmit to their Cuſtoms, both Religious and Civil, as well as their Language; which, (excepting ſome few Variations that Time has occaſioned in the *Orthography*,) is the very ſame, in moſt *Original* Words, with our preſent *Engliſh*, and, conſequently the very Foundation of what we now ſpeak. The *Daniſh* Conqueſt was of no long Continuance; it laſted but a few Reigns: But

* *Vid.* Cambden's *Remains*, *and* Swift's *Letter to the* Lord High Treaſurer.

it left behind it ſome Remains of its Language (Words of a peculiar Force and Energy) as well as Monuments of its Severity. The *Norman* Conqueſt had a more permanent Effect: It altered, in a great meaſure, the whole Body of our Laws; impos'd upon our Anceſtors, for ſome time, a ſtrange Language with Rigour; and left behind it a multitude of Terms, both Civil and Military, in Law, and other Sciences, which, for their great Propriety, are ſtill retain'd.

Edward the Confeſſor indeed, having liv'd long in *France*, ſeems to be the firſt, who introduc'd any Mixture of the *French* Tongue into the *Saxon*, the Court affecting what the Prince was fond of, and others taking it up as a faſhionable Accompliſhment; but *William the Conqueror* proceeded much farther. He brought over with him vaſt Numbers of that Nation, gave them great Quantities of Land; directed all Pleadings to be in that Language, and endeavour'd, to his utmoſt, to make it Univerſal in the Kingdom. Nay, even after the Reſtoration of the *Saxon* Line, the *French* Tongue made ſtill a farther Progreſs in the Reign of *Henry the Second*, who, having large Territories in that Continent both from his Father and his Wife, made frequent Journeys and Expeditions there, and was always attended with a Number of his Countrymen, Retainers at Court. For ſome Centuries after, there was a conſtant Intercourſe between *France* and *England*, by the Dominions we poſſeſſed there, and the Conqueſts we made; ſo that our Language (between two or three hundred Years ago) ſeems to have had a greater Mixture

ture with the *French* than at preſent: many Words having been afterwards rejected, and ſome, ſince the Time of *Spencer*; tho' we have ſtill retained not a few, which have been long antiquated in *France*.

From this ſhort Account it plainly appears, what great Additions and Improvements, at leaſt in Point of Copiouſneſs, our Languge muſt have received, when our very Conquerors contributed to our Riches in this reſpect, and every Revolution in the State has been no ſmall Acceſſion to our Tongue. How much ſoever then we may lament the Fate of our Foreſathers, who liv'd in the Time of theſe Revolutions, when Cuſtoms, and Laws, and Languages, were forc'd upon them by the Dint of the Sword; yet we have this peculiarly to be thankful for, that the Nations, who have ſucceſſively rul'd over us, have ſeverally contributed their Stores to furniſh us with ſuch a Magazine of Words, as is adequate to all the Exigences of Speech; and, with a little Care and proper Digeſtion, capable of making *Engliſh* one of the moſt copious of all modern Tongues. For we have not ſit down contentedly with what our Conquerors impos'd on us, but have made Excurſions our ſelves into other Countries, and rais'd Contributions both from Ancients and Moderns, to enlarge our Patrimony. What free Commerce we have with the *Latin* Tongue; how many Roots, as well as Derivatives from the *Greek* and *Hebrew*; how many fair Scyons we have taken from the Gardens of *France*, *Spain* and *Italy*, cannot be unknown to any one, that is converſant with Languages.

The learned * *Cambden* has given us a Catalogue of Original *Greek* Words, that have an Identity, as he calls it, with ours. 'Twould be no hard Matter or furniſh out a Liſt from other learned Languages; but my *Engliſh* Reader will be content, I hope, to know, that from the *Italians* we borrow the Words *Colonel*, *Captain*, *Banner*, *Baſtion*, *Gabion*, *Parapet*, and many more military Terms, as well as ſuch as related to Muſick, Painting, Building, and ſome other Sciences, for which their Nation has been very famous. From the *Spaniards* we have *Azur*, *Viol*, *Violin*, *Guitar*, *Buffet*, and the Ladies their *Alcoves*, *Taffeties* and *Brocades*. What Freedom we have taken with the *French*, would be infinite to tell. We have naturaliz'd indeed almoſt every Thing that is Significant among them; and 'tis much to be wiſh'd, that we would ſtop our Hands in time, before the Strength and Sinews of our Language be impair'd by too cloſe a Commerce with *one*, that viſibly wants them. If we think we have not yet enough, if we muſt ſtill needs be borrowing, let us go to *ſuch* as are Rich, to ſuch as have Stores, that are inexhauſtible, Words and Numbers that are eſtabliſh'd, and Periods that beſt conform to the natural Cadency of our *own*.

It muſt be own'd then, that our Language, which not only has ſuch a Fund and Stock of its own, but borrows likewiſe from other Nations, and makes, as it were, free Booty wherever it comes, cannot but be rich and abundant in all manner of Expreſſions.

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* *Vid.* Remains, *p.* 32.

But

But becauſe the Deſign of Speech is to be underſtood, and a Multitude of Words will not do without an apt Conſtruction, it hence comes to paſs, that another great Requiſite in any Language is Plainneſs and Perſpicuity. Let us then ſee how it ſtands with our Tongue in relation to this.

II. M. *Le Laboureur*, in his *Advantages of the* French *Tongue*, has taken great Pains to ſhew, that the Order of Words in Compoſition (to make a Tongue perſpicuous) ſhould follow the Order of our Thoughts, and is highly offended at the *Greeks* and *Romans* for tranſpoſing their Words ſo licentiouſly, and thereby perplexing their Senſe. 'Every Man, * ſays he, has but 'the ſame End in ſpeaking, which is to be 'underſtood; but 'tis plain, that if we change 'the natural Courſe of our Thoughts, by in-'verting the Order of our Words, this will 'occaſion a Confuſion, and produce an Effect 'quite contrary to the Inſtitution of Speech. 'Thus, for Inſtance, ſays he, if I were to 'ſpeak of the Eloquence of *Neſtor* in a *figura-'tive* Manner, in order to give my Reader ſome 'great Idea of it, the firſt Thing, that occurs 'to my Thoughts, is his *Speech*: Then to denote 'the Facility and Copiouſneſs of it, I reſem-'ble it to ſome large River, and ſo I ſay *it flows*, 'and becauſe Sweetneſs, as well as Copiouſneſs, 'is requiſite to the Perfection of Eloquence, I 'add, it flows *ſweeter than Honey*, and from 'whence? from *his Tongue*. This is the true

* *Vid. Page* 149.

'Order of Conception in our Minds, and in 'this manner it ſhould be expreſs'd in Words, 'The *Speech of* Neſtor *flows ſweeter than Honey* 'from *his Tongue*; for here every Word in the 'Conſtruction has the ſame Rank and Poſition 'it had in the Thought, and conveys the ſame 'eaſy Perception to the Hearer. Whereas the '*Latin* way of expreſſing it, *ex ejus Ore melle* '*dulcior fluebot oratio*, is but putting the Cart 'before the Horſe, *as he calls it*, and an In-'verſion of the Thought, that diſtracts the 'Mind, at leaſt, keeps it in ſuſpence, till the 'Period is done.

Every Language, it muſt be own'd, has its particular Genius; and Plainneſs and Perſpicuity may, in a great meaſure, belong to the *French*: but the Author *of the Advantages* here makes a Virtue of what, in reality, is a Neceſſity in that Tongue, as well as in all others, where their *Nouns* have neither *Gender* nor *Caſe*. We in our Tongue follow the natural Order of our Thoughts, (tho' not ſo ſtrictly as the *French*) but 'tis becauſe we are compell'd to it for the Prevention of Ambiguity, which would neceſſarily enſue, if we give ourſelves too great a Latitude in Tranſpoſition: but this Inconvenience is not to be fear'd in Languages, whoſe different Terminations denote their Gender and Caſe. Thus, *Hominem fecit Deus*, or *Deus fecit Hominem* in *Latin* is the ſame Thing; but in *Engliſh*, *God made Man*, or *Man made God*, quite the contrary. We are forc'd therefore to avoid too frequent Tranſpoſitions, in order to be underſtood; but the *Greeks* and *Romans* were not under that Neceſſity, becauſe the Termination of their Noun regulated their Senſe; and happy it

was

was for them that they were not, becauſe thereby they obtain'd vaſt Advantages to themſelves in Point of Harmony and Cadence. The Liberty they took, in tranſpoſing a Word from its natural Situation, to a Place where it fell in more agreeably with the Pronunciation of what went before, or what follow'd after, gave a vaſt Scope and Currency to their Eloquence, beſides a wonderful Delection to the Ear.

There are, in my Opinion, but two Things principally to be conſider'd in every Language, *viz.* what Signification the Words convey to the Mind; and what Pleaſure they give to the Ear. The Mind is ſatisfied with the Order of our Ideas, and the Neatneſs of our Expreſſions; but the Ear does not attend to that ſo much, as to the Sound, and Melody, and Cadence of them. Though therefore theſe Tranſpoſitions of Words may occaſion ſome ſmall Trouble to the Mind, in ſorting and reducing them into their proper Places; yet the Pleaſure, which the Ear receives from the Harmony they occaſion, is more than an equivalent Compenſation. But after all, it muſt be own'd, that Tranſpoſitions, when they come to be too frequent, ſo as to perplex and embaraſs the Senſe, cannot be excuſable in any Language whatever, nor may the Sound of any Period commute for its Obſcurity. 'But then, 'if * it be in the Power of a Tongue to join 'the Sweetneſs of Harmony, and the natural 'Order of Ideas together, ſo as to make them 'go on in the ſame agreeable Cadence, as 'thoſe who mix, and blend, and tranſpoſe their 'Words

* *Vid.* Sorbiere *Letter to the Duke of* Chivreuſe.

'Words for the ſake of Number, like People 'in a Dance; it is not to be doubted, but that 'ſuch a Tongue deſerves a Preference before 'one, that brings them out in Rank, one after 'another, and by the way of formal and dull 'Proceſſion.

This, if I miſtake not, is, in a great Meaſure, the Character of our Language. We ſpeak, for the generality, in the Order our Thoughts dictate, ſo that our Language has all the Perſpicuity that Particular can afford us; and yet we ſometimes deviate a little from that Order, where the Grace of Diction, the Cadence of a Period, or the Force of an Expreſſion ſeem to require it; which gives our Language no ſmall Pre-eminence, and a skilful Writer a fair Opportunity to diſtinguiſh himſelf.

III. Another Quality, in the Excellency of any Language, is, the Strength and Significancy of its Expreſſions: For it is not enough that we have a competent Number of plain and intelligible Words, we ſhall have occaſion, many times, for *lofty* and *pathetick*, and ſhall want to explain ourſelves upon a vaſt Variety of Subjects: let us then ſee what our Language can ſupply us with upon ſuch Occaſions. It is, indeed, a Compilation, as I ſhew'd, of what is beſt, and moſt ſignificant out of other Tongues; and if the Performances of our Authors may be thought a good Proof of its Expreſſiveneſs, there is no Science ſo refin'd, no Argument ſo abſtruſe, as may not be treated in it, with all imaginable Succeſs. The Orator, the Poet, the Philoſopher, Men of all Arts and Sciences, in ſhort, write in our Tongue with the ſame Propriety

priety and Diverſity of Stile, as in the moſt learned Language. Our Divines are juſtly celebrated in all the *Chriſtian* World; but 'tis to the Strength and Nervouſneſs of the Tongue wherein they write, as well as the Truth of the Doctrine, and Vivacity of the Sentiments, they deliver, that a good Part of their Glory is to be aſcrib'd. Our Phyſicians have been long applauded in the learned World, and (what redounds at laſt to their own Commendation, as well as the Honour of their native Tongue) can explain themſelves as elegantly in *Engliſh*, as *Galen* could have done in *Greek*, or *Fernel* in *Latin*. Our Hiſtorians have ſhewn the Applicableneſs of our Tongue to the Matter of Narration; and what is wrote of the *Rebellion* and *Reformation*, will be a laſting Monument of its Extenſiveneſs, as well as the Greatneſs of thoſe Revolutions. *Lock* upon *Human Underſtanding*, and *Burnet* in his *Theory of the Earth*, have carried our Language, with great Succeſs, into the moſt abſtruſe Queſtions of natural and metaphyſical Knowledge. Our Tranſlators, (ſuch as have been of Ability to penetrate the Senſe of their Authors) have diſplay'd the Power of our Tongue with great Advantage; and one Fable in Sir *Roger L'Eſtrange* is as much an Inſtance of its Sufficiency in *ſimple* and eaſy Diction, as Mr. *Pope*'s *Homer* ſhews, how near a Copy may approach the loftieſt *Original*. Our Poets, indeed, have been very ſucceſsful in their way; but 'tis owing, in ſome meaſure, to the Language wherein he wrote, that *Milton* leads out his embattled Angels with ſo much Strength; that *Shakeſpear*'s Pictures of Nature are ſo juſt and noble; that *Otway*'s Grief is ſo awful and com-

commanding; that *Dryden*'s Deſcriptions are ſo beautiful; *Congreve*'s Wit ſo eaſy and genteel; and *Wicherley*'s Satyr ſo ſtrong and pointed. I admire the Writings of *Denham*, *Suckling*, and *D'Avenant*; am raviſh'd with the Fancy of *Cowley*, with the Gallantry of *Waller*, with the eaſy and loſty Muſe of *Prior*, and think that *Butler* is inimitable: But, for all this, I cannot but conceive, that there is ſomething in the Tongue itſelf that gave a vaſt Help to their Fancy; an Eaſineſs ſometimes, and ſometimes a Loftineſs of Expreſſion, that embelliſhes the Thought not a little: and, for this Reaſon, I am apt to believe it is, that our Tragedians have better ſucceeded in their Compoſitions than any other Nation. The Strength, the Life, the Vigour of our Tongue, the Softneſs of its Cadence in ſome Words, and the rapid Concurrence of its harſher Conſonants in others, give Grief and Rage their different Turns, and are mightily aſſiſtant to the Poet's Paſſion. They follow, indeed, his Sentiments naturally, and come crowding in upon him, as he is meditating his Subject. But, however that be, 'tis a ſure Argument, that a Language is very Significant and Expreſſive, when ſo many different Things, in ſo many different Manners, can be handled with all the Life and Elegance imaginable.

IV. There is but one Quality more that I account Eſſential to the Excellency of any Language, and that is, the Sweetneſs and Harmony of its Cadence: for it is not enough that the Mind be inſtructed, unleſs the Ear be, in ſome meaſure, ſatisfy'd; *Aures enim, vel Animus aurium*

aurium Nuncio naturalem quandam in ſe continet vocum omnium mentionem, &c *. Let us then ſee of what Efficacy our Language is, as to the Gratification of the Ear.

Letters we know are of a different Pronounciation: Some go off more ſmoothly, ſome more roughly from the Tongue; and 'tis the Beauty of a Language, in Point of Harmony, when the Strong and Weak, the Soft and Harſh are ſo intermixt, as to ſupport the Majeſty of the Sound, without the letting it glide away, or fall into a faint Eccho. And accordingly we may obſerve, that the beſt Refiners of their Tongues have been as ſollicitous to avoid the frequent Concurrence of Vowels, which make the Tone languid, as that of Conſonants, which make it too ſtrong: Thus the *Greeks*, inſtead of Καὶ ἐγὼ, ſay Κἀγὼ, and inſtead of δέδωκε αὐτῷ, (where the two Vowels meeting together made a *Void*,) intercert a Letter, and ſay δέδωκεν αὐτῷ.

To apply this to our preſent Purpoſe. Our Language is loaded with Conſonants indeed, and, in what we retain from our *Saxon* Anceſtors, is very harſh and rough in its Pronunciation; but then, conſidering the great Acceſſions we have had from other Languages, that are more melodious, it is not out of the Power of a skilful Writer, ſo to prevent the Concurrence of ſharp Conſonants, ſo to diſpoſe his Words, and adjuſt his Periods; to interſperſe Things, as his Ear requires them, here to put a ſofter, there a rougher Sound, here a ſhorter, there

* Tull. Orator. *p.* 709. ex Edit. Bleau.

there a longer Termination; to mellow or ſharpen the Tone by the Intervention of contrary Accents; and to carry the Sentence on to ſuch a Rotundity, as not to diſcover any want of Harmony; and in this the Quinteſſence of fine *Proſe-Writing* conſiſts, as * one of the greateſt Maſters of that Art has told us.

The Ancients indeed are very exact in the harmonious Part of Eloquence; they deſcend to the laſt Detail, counting the very Feet and Syllables, and teaching us what Meaſures are proper for the Beginning, what for the Middle, and what for the Concluſion of every Sentence; but their Rules will not agree with the Nature of a Language, whoſe Menſuration is not adjuſted. We may not then perhaps have all the Variety of Meaſures, which the *Greeks* and *Latins* make ſo great boaſt of; but there are other Things equally contributing to Harmony, wherein we are not defective. There is a Variety of Words of all Lengths; a Variety of Terminations of all Sounds; a Power of compounding Words to a great Degree, of mixing long and ſhort Sentences together, and of giving ſuch a Turn to the Diction, as fills the Ear. There are ſome Phraſes likewiſe, that ſeem to reſemble Verſe, and others that have a relation to each other, either upon account of their Oppoſition, or

* Neque eſt ex multis res una, quæ magis Oratorem ab Imperito dicendi, ab ignaroq; diſtinguat; quam quod ille rudis, & in conditè fundit, quantum poteſt; & id, quod dicit ſpiritum, non arte determinat; Orator autem, ſic illegat ſententiam Verbis, ut eam numero quodam complectatur, & adſtricto & ſoluto. Cic. Orat, p. 549.

or their Equality or Inequality: Theſe we have in common with the Ancients, and theſe are the only Sources from whence our Harmony in Proſe-Compoſitions can ariſe.

We affect not then to come up to the Softneſs and melting Tone of ſome of our Neighbours, who have ſpoil'd their Sinews to meliorate their Sound. Our Language is ſtrong and maſculine, bold and majeſtick; but there is Muſick, I hope, in a Trumpet, as well as in a Flute or Guitar.

Our Writers, it muſt be own'd, before the Revolution, had few of them any Notion of Harmony in Proſe. They chop and curtail their Sentences, or elſe draw them out to unmerciful Length. They load them with Parentheſis, and many times throw the Matter of five or ſix Periods into one; but their Language, or their Poſterity (that have adventur'd to do better) is not to be charg'd with the Faults of particular Men, that were carried away with a deprav'd Taſte, or knew not how to make the beſt Uſe of what Advantages they had in Hand.

Our Poets, however, have long ago given us great Proof of the Power of our Language in Point of Harmony. *Chaucer* and *Spencer*'s Verſification is not amiſs: and tho' Softneſs be not *its* proper Genius, yet Mr. *Dryden* in one particular * Ode, and † Mr. *Addiſon* in a kind of Opera-Performance, have let the World ſee, how capable it is of the greateſt Variety of

* *On St.* Cecelia's *Day.*
† Fair Roſamond.

of Numbers, and the tendereſt Notes of Muſick.

Pindar is juſtly eſteem'd, both for flowing Diction, and his daring Flights; and yet, if Mr. *Cowley* may be thought not to follow him with an equal Pace, Mr. *Prior*, I think, in one ſingle Attempt of this Nature, has outdone him.

Yet whether would the adventurous Goddeſs go?
Sees ſhe not Clouds, and Earth, and Main below?
Minds ſhe the Danger of the Lybian *Coaſt?*
And Fields, where mad Bellerephon *was loſt?* &c.
Yet upward ſhe inceſſant flies,
Reſolv'd to reach the high Imperial Sphere,
And tell great Jove *ſhe ſings his Image here,* &c.
Till, loſt in tractleſs Fields of ſhining Day,
Unable to diſcern her Way,
Which Naſſau's *Virtue only could explore,*
Untouch'd, unknown to any Muſe before;
She from the noble Precipice is thrown,
Comes ruſhing with uncommon Ruin down,
Glorious Attempt, &c.

I ſpoil the Number, in ſome meaſure, by cutting ſhort my Quotation; but the whole Ode, beſides the Dignity of the Sentiments, is truly Dithyrambick in its Stile, and a glorious Inſtance of the original Goodneſs of our Tongue.

Homer is deſervedly reputed very happy in his Verſification, and has a peculiar Talent (as *Longinus* obſerves) of expreſſing his Sentiments in the Sound, as well as Senſe, of his Words. Mr. *Pope*, if I miſtake not, has done that Juſtice to our Tongue, as to ſhew it al-

moſt

moſt adequate to the *Greek* in this reſpect, and, under what View ſoever the Object is conſider'd, his Words and Numbers have always a Conformity.

The dreadful Ægis, Jove's immortal Shield,
Blaz'd on her Arm, and lighten'd all the Field.
Round the vaſt Orb an hundred Serpents roll'd;
Form'd the bright Fringe, and ſeem'd to burn in Gold *.

The Verſion is certainly better than the Original in this, that it ſhews the Refulgency of the Thing, it means to repreſent, in a fairer Light.

Murm'ring they move, as when the Ocean roars,
And heaves huge Surges to the trembling Shores.
The groaning Banks are burſt with bellowing Sound,
The Rocks remurmur, and the Deeps rebound †.

The very Sound of the Words, you perceive, convey an awful Idea, even tho' a Man had never ſeen the Swelling, nor heard the Noiſe of that boiſterous Element.

Homer, as Criticks obſerve, is very remarkable for leading out an Army in Battle-Array, and teaches us, in the gradual Increaſe of the Sound of his Words, the manner of their March, and advance to the Enemy; nor is his Tranſlator inferiour in this reſpect.

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* Vid. Pope's Homer, *pag.* 526.
† *Ibid. pag.* 249.

As when the Winds, aſcending by Degrees,
Firſt move the whit'ning Surface of the Seas,
The Billows float in order to the Shore,
The Wave behind rolls on the Wave before,
Till with the growing Storm the Deeps ariſe,
Foam o'er the Rocks, and thunder to the Skies.
So to the Fight the thick Batallions throng,
Shields urg'd on Shields, and Men drove Men (along *.

The Deſcription that *Homer* gives us of the Battle of the Gods, in his 20th Book, has ſomething prodigiouſly great and magnificent in it; and, beſides the Sublimity of the Thought, contains, as it were, a Sound of Horror and Dreadfulneſs in the very Words. The famous *Boileau*, in his Edition of *Longinus* in *French*, has given us this Tranſlation of one Paſſage:

L'Enfer s'emeut au Bruit de Neptune en furie,
Pluton ſort de ſon Trone, il pâlit il s'ecrie;
Il a peur, que ce Dieu, dans cet effreux ſejour,
D'un Coup de ſon Trident, ne faſſe entrer le jour;
Et par le Center ouvert de la Terre ébranlée,
Ne fas voir du Styx la Rive diſolée;
Ne découvre aux vivans cet Empire odieux,
Abhorré des Mortels, et craint même des Dieux.

Let us then ſee whether it makes not as good an Appearance in *Engliſh*.

Above

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* Vid. Pope's Homer, *pag.* 478.

Above the Sire of Gods in Thunder rolls,
And Peals on Peals redoubled rend the Poles.
Beneath ſtern Neptune *ſhakes the ſolid Ground,*
The Foreſts wave, and Mountains nod around.
Deep in the diſmal Regions of the Dead,
The infernal Monarch rear'd his horrid Head;
Leap'd from his Throne, leſt Neptune's *Arms ſhould (lay,*
His dark Dominions open to the Day, &c.

But I forget my ſelf, as I always do, when I wander in the Maze of the many Beauties of that great Man, *Cui mens divinor, atque os magna ſonaturum.*

What I have ſaid is enough to ſhew, that our Language wants not Number and Harmony, Strength and Energy, Riches and Copiouſneſs, Clearneſs and Perſpicuity; that its Words are expreſſive, its Periods ſtrong, and its Sounds melodious, when it falls into a skilful Hand, and is carried up to the Pitch of Purity and Elegance, that it will bear.

But is it therefore arriv'd at its utmoſt Perfection? Is there nothing that ought to be added, or ſubſtracted from it? * *Has it, at this Day, all the Advantages and Excellencies, that its Nature admits of?* I am ſorry to ſay, that we are led away with too fond an Admiration of our own Age and Nation, when we think ſo; and have the Opinion of a very ingenious

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Vid. *Mr.* Welſted's *Diſſertation concerning the Perfection of the* Engliſh *Tongue.*

Writer to ſupport me, when I affirm, that there are many Alterations to be made, much to be added, and much amended and reform'd, before the Structure can, in any degree, be deem'd *compleat*. For, * " beſide the Grammar part, " wherein we are allow'd to be very defective, " it is no hard Matter to obſerve many groſs " Improprieties, which, however authoriz'd " by Practice, and grown Familiar, ought to " be diſcarded; many Words, that deſerve to " be utterly thrown out of our Language; " many more to be corrected; and, perhaps, " not a few, long ſince antiquated, which de- " ſerve to be reſtor'd, on account of their " Energy, and Sound. But beſides the vulgar Elements of Speech, Are all our Phraſes, in common uſe, full and ſignificant? Are all our Figures eaſy, and natural, and wiſely, as well as boldly, choſen? And is there no Turn to be given to our Periods, to make them go off with a better Grace, and given more Pleaſure to the Ear? Our Congregations, I am apt to believe, would be more vigilant, and our Preachers no leſs edifying, if they could once perſuade themſelves of what *Tully* taught the World ſo long ago, † *Eſſe quoſdam certos Curſus & Concluſiones Verborum, quibus aures delectantur.* In ſhort, have we attain'd to the uttmoſt Perfection of all Arts and Sciences? (for they are the Meaſure of a Tongue's Proficiency) have we, from other Languages, naturaliz'd all the Terms,

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* Swift's *Letter.*

† Cic. Orat. *pag.* 739.

Terms, that ſuit with the Idiom of our own? And are there not ſome that ought to be diſinfranch'd again, as incompatible therewith? Above all, Is the Orthography and Signification of our Languages ſettled? Have we a certain way of Writing, and a determinate Senſe fix'd upon every Word, from whence we may not ſwerve? What the Labours of an * ingenious Gentleman may produce, Time will diſcover; but till we are ſupply'd with ſome ſuch Help, as he deſigns, we write by Gueſs, more than any ſtated Rule, and form every Man his Diction, either according to his Humour and *Caprice*, or in purſuance of a blind and ſervile *Imitation*.

I have never known this Town, ſays a very great † Maſter of Stile and Obſervation, without one or more *Dunces* of Figure, who had Credit enough to give Riſe to ſome new Word, and propagate it in moſt Converſation, tho' it had neither Humour nor Significancy. If it ſtruck the preſent Taſte, it was ſoon transferred into the *Plays*, and current *Scribbles* of the Week, and ſo became an Addition to our Language; while the Men of Wit and Learning, inſtead of early obviating ſuch Corruptions, were too often ſeduc'd to imitate, and comply with them. Several young Men at the Univerſity, terribly poſſeſs'd with the Fear of *Pedantry*, run into a worſe Extream, and think that all Politeneſs conſiſts in reading the daily

* Swift's *Letter*.

† *Mr.* Philips's *Propoſals for a Dictionary*.

Traſh, that proceeds from the ſeveral Preſſes in Town. Being thus furniſh'd, they come up; reckon all their Errors for Accompliſhments; borrow the new Set of Phraſes; and, if they take Pen in their Hands, all the odd Words they have pick'd up in a Coffee-houſe, or, Gaming-Ordinaries, are produc'd as Flowers of Stile. Nay, our very Poets (continues the ſame Author) eſpecially ſince the Time of the *Reſtoration*, tho' they could not but be ſenſible how much our Language is already overſtock'd with Monoſyllables, yet, to ſave themſelves Time and Pains, have introduc'd a barbarous Cuſtom of abreviating Words, to fit them to the Meaſure of their Verſes; and this they have frequently done ſo very injudiciouſly, as to form ſuch harſh unharmonious Sounds, that none, but a *Northern* Ear, can endure them. They have join'd the moſt obdurate Conſonants, without one intervening Vowel, only to ſhorten a Syllable, and their Taſte in time has become ſo deprav'd, that, what was at firſt a *Poetical Licence*, not to be juſtified, they made their Choice; alledging, that the Words pronounc'd at length, ſounded faint and languid: and, under this Pretence, even Proſe-writers, who lay under no ſuch Reſtraint, have been induc'd to embrace the ſame Error.

Such are the Imperfections, which naturally adhere to our Language, and ſuch the ill Precedents, which we every where meet, and are apt to infect us: but now the Queſtion is, What poſſible Means can be found out, to bring Matters of this Nature to better Regulation.

I. An

I. An * Author of great Judgment and Sagacity has help'd us to an Expedient, which if it were put in Practice, would effectually do the Work; and that is, the *Inſtitution of an Academy* for the purifying and perfecting our Tongue. "I know indeed, ſays he, that "the *Engliſh* Genius is not ſo airy and diſ-"courſive, as that of ſome of our Neighbours, "(meaning the *French*) but love to have Rea-"ſon ſet out in plain Expreſſions, as much as "*they*, to have it delivered with Colour and "Beauty. They have one great Aſſiſtance too "to the Growth of Oratory, which to us is "wanting: their Nobility live commonly cloſe "together in Cities; ours, for the moſt Part "ſcatter'd in their Country-Houſes; and yet "it is from frequent Converſation, that the "Humour, and Wit, and Variety, and Ele-"gance of a Language are chiefly to be fetch'd. "But, notwithſtanding theſe Diſcouragements, "I ſhall not ſtick to ſay, that ſuch a Project "is now ſeaſonable to be ſet on foot, and "may make a great Reformation in the man-"ner of our Speaking and Writing. The Truth "is, the *Engliſh* Tongue has been too much "neglected, and hitherto had leſs Labour "ſpent about its poliſhing, than it deſerves. "Till the Time of *Henry* the Eighth, there was "ſcarce a Man regarded it, but *Chaucer*; and "nothing was written in it, that one would "have read twice, but ſome of his Poetry;

* *Biſhop* Sprat *in his Hiſtory of the Royal Society*, pag. 40, &c.

" but then it began to raiſe itſelf a little, and " to ſound tollerably well. From that Age, " down to the beginning of the *Civil* Wars, " it was ſtill faſhioning and beautifying itſelf. " With the *Reſtoration* many out-landiſh Phraſes " were brought in, and made free, as Men " pleas'd; and it was enlarg'd too with many " ſound and neceſſary Terms and Idioms, " which it before wanted. But all this was " done by private Hands, and aroſe fortuitouſly, " rather than from any form'd Deſign. Now " when Men's Minds are ſomewhat ſettled, " their Paſſions are allay'd, and the Peace of " our Country gives the Leiſure for ſuch Di- " verſions; if ſome ſober and judicious Men " would take the whole Maſs of our Language " into their Hands, as they find it, would ſet " a Mark on ill Words, correct thoſe, which " are to be retain'd, admit and eſtabliſh the " good, and make ſome Emendations in the " Accent and Grammar; I dare pronounce, " that our Speech would quickly arrive at as " much Plenty, as it is capable to receive, " and at the greateſt Smoothneſs, which its " Derivation from the rough *German* would al- " low it.

And if that learned Hiſtorian thought it no improper time to ſet about a Work of this Nature, juſt as the Nation had eſcap'd from a long-continued State of Rebellion; much more will it be ſeaſonable for us now, when (under the Influence of his Majeſty's Counſels) an univerſal Peace and Tranquility, not only in *Great-Britain*, but all *Europe* over, gives us a fair Opportunity of improving in all Kinds of Literature. We want not Men ſufficient for the Work,

nor

nor a Strength of Genius to perfect it. We want not a Road chalk'd out for our Endeavours; for Mr. *Pelliſon*, in his Hiſtory *De l'Acadamie Francoiſe*, has ſhewn us in what Method we are to proceed. We want not Encouragement to animate our Endeavours, nor need we doubt, that his Majeſty, whoſe Heart is ſo truly *Engliſh*, and his Bounty for the Advancement of other modern Languages among us ſo conſpicuous, will come behind any of his Royal Predeceſſors, in communicating his Favour and Protection to any *Society* of Men, that ſhall combine together for the Improvement of their *own*. And it ſhould raiſe our Emulation, one would think, at this Conjuncture, to let the World ſee, that, among the many ſubſtantial Bleſſings, wherein we ſurpaſs other Nations, we are not behind them in the Ornaments of Eloquence, and in the Form of a Language; which, with a little Pains and Emendation, may be rais'd to as great a Purity and Perfection, as any. Nor is the Attempt to be accounted a trivial Matter, ſince Purity of Speech, and Greatneſs of Empire, have in all Countries, met together; ſince the *Greeks* ſpoke beſt, when they were in the Glory of their Conqueſt; and the *Romans* made that Time the Standard of their Wit, when they ſubdu'd, and gave Laws to the World. But the chief Care of ſuch a *Society*, as I am propoſing, ſhould be, to find out ſome Method, whereby to *fix* and *aſcertain* our Language for ever, after ſuch Alterations are made in it, as ſhall be thought requiſite: Nor can I conceive the Thing impoſſible to be done, conſidering

dering * how long the Purity of the *Greek* Tongue may be ſaid to have laſted; † how ancient the *Chineſe* have Books in their Language at this very Day, and what few or no Changes have happen'd in the *German*, *Spaniſh* and *Italian*, for ſome Ages paſt. Only when I ſay, that, (after a due Correction of our Language) I would have it *fix'd*, I do not mean that it ſhould never be enlarg'd: for conſidering the many Terms of Art, which are acquir'd in Trade and in War, the new Inventions, that happen in the World, the Improvement of Sciences, and the vaſt ſpreading of Navigation and Commerce, with many other obvious Circumſtances, it cannot otherwiſe be, but that Additions to any Language (as the World increaſes in Knowledge) ſhould daily be made; but ‖ all that I mean is, that when once our Language is brought to a competent Standard of Purity, no Words, to which this Society ſhall give a Sanction (whatever *new* ones they may think proper to receive) ſhall ever after be *antiquated* and exploded; whereby Authors, as they grow old, may ſtill continue valuable, according to their intrinſick Worth, and not be thrown aſide, on account of unintelligible Words and Phraſes, which appear harſh and uncouth only becauſe they are out of Faſhion. But till this can be done,

II. There

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* *From* Homer *to* Plutarch *are above a Thouſand Years.*

† *Above two thouſand Years old.*

‖ *Vid.* Swift's *Letters.*

II. There is another Expedient, that may not be inconduceable to the *Improvement*, at leaſt, to the Prevention of any farther Decay of our Tongue; and that is, the *Regulation of the Preſs*, by ſuch learned and impartial Hands, as may put a Stop to the Publication of ſuch Books, as deprave the Taſte, as well as Manners of the Nation, and give their Sanction to nothing, but what is Perfect in their Kind.

Lucian, in his witty and ironical Humour tells us of two ways, that will lead us to Eloquence, the one ſhort and eaſy, and beſtrow'd with Flowers, the other rough and tedious, and beſet with Briars: *Labour* and Application is the one, and *Ignorance* and Frontery the other: and, in this Allegory, he introduces two Perſons of very different Characters, each adviſing us to take the way that he directs. He, that pleads for *Induſtry*, is repreſented as a ſtrong robuſt Perſon, with a grave ſevere Countenance. He offers to conduct the Lovers of Eloquence along the Path, that was once frequented by ſuch as *Plato* and *Demoſthenes*, but is now grown over with Brambles, tho' ſome Footſteps of theſe great Men are ſtill to be ſeen in it. He warns them, that the leaſt Deviation from the Path, that he points out, is falling down a Precipice; offers them nothing but the Speeches of the *Acients* of a ſtrong and maſculine Eloquence, for their Imitation; aſſures them, that, if they mean to ſucceed therein, they muſt Study; talks to them of Labours and Watchings, not for Months and Years, but for whole Luſtras and Olympiads, and, all this while, enjoins them Abſtinence, and to live ſecluded from the World.

In

In the other Path he repreſents a Perſon well dreſs'd, that looks Gay and Jolly, with a fine Mein and Elequence, that would even charm one to follow him; deſpiſing the greateſt Orators that went before him, and reckoning himſelf as much above them, as a Trumpet excels a Flute. " In the firſt Place, ſays " he, I make no Account of Knowledge and " Study: be but bold and hardy, and there is " no Neceſſity to be learned. Get, in the " next Place, rid of that Modeſty, which makes " you conceive too meanly of your ſelf: look " big, walk ſtately, be Gay in your Habit, " and Pompous in your Retinue; and whatever you do, get a ſet of new Words and " Phraſes *a-la-mode*, and then you may write " on all Subjects indifferently, without Stile " or Diction, Method or Form. This was " not indeed dull *Demoſthenes*'s way, but we live " in another Age, and have a taſte of Things " more Polite. Above all (and let this be my " chief Injunction) ſecure a Party to cry up " your Works; commend your own, diſparage " all other Men's Performaces; and if you " follow this Courſe *in Publick*, I'll give you " a Diſpenſation to live as idlely, as you pleaſe " *at Home*.

Whether of theſe two Guides have under their Care the preſent Set of Writers, I leave others to determine; and mean no more by this Suggeſtion, than how much it would tend to the Honour of our Tongue, as well as the Improvement of Learning in General, that the World be not impos'd upon by ſham Titles; that cant Words, and Phraſes of no Analogy with the Idiom of our Tongue, be rejected; that

that the Itch of Writing be in ſome Meaſure allay'd; and the Peſt of Books, whoſe Gilding and Lettering is their beſt Commendation, be not ſuffer'd to prey upon our Language, and corrupt our Taſte *And the only Means to bring this about*, ſays a very skilful * Judge, *is to ſettle a fix'd and impartial Court of Learning and Eloquence, according to whoſe Cenſure, all Books and Authors ſhould ſtand or fall:* But this is a Project of too diſtant a Proſpect; and till it can be happily effected.

III. Another Expedient, not unworthy the Conſideration of ſuch, as are entruſted with the Education of Youth, is, to have ſome of our beſt Authors, both in Verſe and Proſe, read in a *Claſſical* manner to their Pupils, and Exerciſes of all Kinds perform'd in their *Mother Tongue*. And whatever ſome little Pedants may think of this Propoſal, the *Greeks* and *Romans*, who certainly knew the beſt Methods of advancing the Purity of their Languages, had their Children taught in the manner I am now ſuggeſting. They had their own Authors read to them, their Beauties pointed out, and the Stile and Order of the whole Compoſition laid open and deſected, for their Improvement and Imitation; and accordingly we find *Cicero* telling his Son, That while he went through a Courſe Philoſophy under *Chryſippus*; Stile and Diction, and other Ornaments of Oratory, he muſt learn from his Writings.

Far am I from impairing the Merit of any learned Language, but, for my Heart, I cannot con-

* Sprat's *Hiſtory of the Royal Society, pag.* 48.

conceive, why a Tongue, wherein we are to act upon the Stage of the World, wherein we are to negotiate our Affairs, and diſplay our Eloquence moſt, ſhould be ſo entirely poſtpon'd for what is not near ſo uſeful to us; for what we commonly forget, we ſeldom learn perfectly, and our Maſters themſelves have not often the Capacity to teach us. Nay, with all Deference to theſe learned Bodies, the two *Univerſities*, I have oft thought with my ſelf, that if more *Latin* were heard in their private Converſation, and more *Engliſh* in their publick Schools, their Improvement in Learning (for Learning lies in Things, and not in Words) would not be retarded; our Bars and Pulpits would be fill'd with more Sufficiency; our Youth would be better qualified for Buſineſs; and Strangers more admire the Method of our Education: and in this I have the Happineſs to concur with a Name of great Authority. "I am not unmindful, (* ſays our "Author) of the Devotion I owe to thoſe "Places, nor of that Eſteem I profeſs to have "for the Guides and Governours thereof, "as to go about to preſcribe new Forms and "Schemes of Education, where Wiſdom has "laid her Top-ſtone; but it may not be a-"miſs to enquire, whether or no it were not "highly uſeful, that *Engliſh* Exerciſes were "impos'd upon Lads, in *private*, at leaſt, if "not in their *publick Schools*. *Chicken-Broth* is not thinner, than what is common "ly

* Echard's *Contempt of the Clergy*, pag. 37, 39.

" ly offered in our Schools, for a Piece of moſt " pleading and convincing Senſe: whereas, " if Lads were firſt of all to determine in " *Engliſh* what they intend to ſay in *Latin*, " they would, of themſelves, ſoon diſcern the " Pittifulneſs of their Matter, and the Impertinency of their Tales and Fancies; and, " according to their Age and Parts, offer that " which is much more manly and tollerable " Senſe. And (to ſpeak freely) moſt of that " Ridiculouſneſs, fantaſtical Phraſes, harſh " Metaphors, foppiſh Similitudes, childiſh " and empty Tranſitions, and the like, ſo " commonly utter'd out of the Pulpits, and " ſo fatally redounding to the Diſcredit of the " Clergy, may in a great meaſure be charg'd " upon the want of that, which we have here " conteſted for."

IV. But till theſe publick Expedients can be brought to bear, what is of private Uſe, and will prove very ſerviceable to the Refinement of our Tongue, will be reading the beſt Authors, and writing with great Care and Circumſpection our ſelves. I ſay *the beſt Authors*, becauſe nothing is more contagious than bad Models, when they have the publick Approbation; and one ſingle Genius, with bright Qualities, and an extended Fame, has ſometimes ſpoil'd the Taſte of a whole Nation. But here the Queſtion returns, who are the beſt Authors, and by what Characteriſticks we may know them? The ſeveral Advocates for the *Ancients* and *Moderns* have diſputed this Matter a little too eagerly, and carried their Reſentments too far; for all impartial

partial Men muſt agree, that, of what Age or Nation ſoever an Author be, who treats his Subject with a ſuitable Dignity, whoſe Notions are juſt, Diction lively, and Sentences *numerous*; who writes with Eaſe and Strength at the ſame time, and makes his Eloquence natural, mageſtick, and uniform, is a fit Pattern for an Imitation: always ſuppoſing, that the Genius of the Tongue, wherein he writes, and the Length and Turn of the Period he gives himſelf, be, in ſome meaſure, conformable to *ours*. *Homer* and *Virgil*, *Taſſo* and *Laboureur*, *Milton* and *Pope*, in the way of ſublime Poetry; *Zenophon* and *Livy*, *Davola* and *Clarendon*, *Pelliſon* and *Sprat*, in the ſtrong and clear Narration of Hiſtory, are great Examples, and what we may * dwell upon with Profit. *Demoſthenes* is a compleat Writer, *Ariſtotle* gives good Rules; and *Quintilian* is very minute in the Formation of his Orator: but there is none among the Ancients, from whom we can draw ſo much Benefit, ſo much Eloquence and Politeneſs, ſo much Solidity and good Senſe, Stiles of ſo great a Variety, Diction ſo congruous, and Periods ſo conſonant to the Nature of our Tongue, as *Cicero*; and 'twas the great Happineſs of Eloquence, (as † one expreſſes it) that it chanc'd to fall into the Hands of one, who has not only carried it to the higheſt Pitch of Perfection himſelf, but given us likewiſe the beſt Rules to direct

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* Certis Ingeniis immorari & enutriri oportet. Sen. Ep. 11.

† Rapin's *Preface to his* Reflections on Eloquence.

us in it: And among theſe, as I ſaid before, writing our ſelves with the greateſt Care and Circumſpection is not the leaſt. * *Stilus enim optimus & præſtantiſſimus dicendi Effector & Magiſter: nec injuriâ*, for if (as he goes on) what we premeditate is more eloquent than what we ſpeak *extempore*; what we write will have this farther Advantage, that the moſt weighty and ſignificant Terms and Expreſſions will become familiar to us by Practice, and the Structure and Conformation of our Words fall into an *Oratorical*, tho' not *Poetical* Number. The Truth is, the Habit of Writing works ſuch Wonders, that ſome, I could name, with no great Abilities, and leſs Learning, have, meerly by the Dint of Exerciſe, wrought themſelves up to a Propriety of Diction, and Fluency of Stile, that has gain'd themſelves a Name, and brought no Diſhonour to their Native Tongue; and 'twere only to be wiſh'd, that ſuch, as buſy themſelves in this Employment, would bear in Remembrance this Admonition, —— That, in every Thing they publiſh, they are adding to the Stock of their Mother Tongue, and contributing either to its Abaſement or Exaltation; that, conſequently, not only their own Name and Credit is at Stake, but that the Honour of their Nation, Opinion, that Foreigners will have of us, the Judgment of the preſent Age, and the Cenſure of Poſterity, are all concern'd in what they do. *How would* Homer *have expreſs'd this?* Is the Incitement of *Longinus* to the Writers of

* *Vid.* Tull. de Oratore, p. 334. ex Edit. Bleau.

his Age, wherewith I deſire to cloſe up mine: *What would* Plato, *or* Demoſthenes, *or* (*if it be a Matter of Hiſtory*) *what would* Thucydides *have ſaid in this Place?* Theſe great Men, when preſented to the Imagination in a lively manner, raiſe the Mind of a Writer to a kind of Equality with them: *If they were now here preſent, What would they ſay to us? What Judgment would they paſs upon our Works?* It is no trivial Prize we are contending for, we ſhould think, if we were once perſuaded that our Writings were to be ſubmitted to ſuch an illuſtrious Tribunal, and expos'd upon the Theatre, where ſuch great Maſters were to be Judges: *But above all, what will Poſterity ſay of us? and the Ages to come, what Cenſure will they put upon our Compoſitions?* This (as our Author concludes) is the moſt powerful Motive: The Man that writes for his own Age only, can never produce any Thing, but what is blind, abortive, and imperfect; becauſe he will never take the Pains to make a finiſh'd Work of what he deſigns not for Poſterity.

F I N I S.

THE

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